

# Between Words and Meaning

**The translations of Brian Friel,  
*Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa***

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“Gan cuimhne, dúramar arís agus arís eile, nil aon phrionsabal i ndóchas” (Ricoeur)

I gcuimhne ar m’athair agus ar mo mháthair agus Mira.

Is iomaí duine a bhfuil mé faoi chomaoín aige as an gcuidiú a tugadh dom, ag cur an tráchtas seo le chéile. Sa gcéad áit, tá mé faoi chomaoín ag mo thuismitheoirí, a dtíolacaim an staidéar seo dóibh, ag teaghlach mo bhreithe, idir mharbh agus bheo, go háirithe ag Edward agus Jacqueline, ag m’fhear céile agus ag ár gclann féin, agus John Goodliffe, agus sgoiláir Gordon Spence. Uathasan, agus ó mo cháirde sa dá leathsféar, d’fhoghlaim mé tábhacht na cumarsáide, bainte amach go minic le stró, trí litreacha lena mbearnaí dosheacanta.

Is iontach an marc a d’fhág an comhfhreagras ar mo shaol agus ar mo chuid staidéir. Tá mé faoi chomaoín, freisin, ag obair Bhraín Uí Fhrighil - fócas mo chuid staidéir -, ag an fhear féin agus ag a chomhleacaithe a thug freagraí chomh mórchoíoch sin dom ar na ceistanna ó na fritíortha. Is beag duine a ainmnítear anseo ach, mar is léir ón tráchtas féin, ón leabharliosta agus ó na nótaí buíochais, chuidigh a lán daoine liom. Beannaím d’achan duine agaibh, gabhaim buíochas libh agus iarraim pardún oraibh as aon easpa, bíodh sí ina easpa phearsanta nó acadúil, mar níl baint aici leis an muinín, an trua ná an ionrachas a thaispeánann sibh, ach cuireann ár n-easpaí i gcuimhne dúinn nach foirfe riamh an duine, ach oiread leis an tsamhlaíocht, agus nach mór dó coinneáil leis ar a aistear.

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## Preface

Language and culture are vitalised by differences: differences crucial to the production of meaning, revealing that it is never singular, mimetic or transparent but open to constant translation. Some of the most revealing evidence of these differences is found in the writing of Ireland, writing which shows that, paradoxically, even when differences are officially suppressed in favour of unity or consolidation, their return is inevitable, since their rejected presence clarifies the dominant ideology. Equally, though, like a stammer from a silenced past, they also confirm what Kristeva calls 'nocturnal memories' which can be remembered and re-membered differently.<sup>1</sup>

How to remember and how to re-member (embrace) differences remains the ongoing challenge in Ireland, responded to by a nucleus of contemporary writers, including Brian Friel, who assert that one possible approach to this crucial process is through translation — critical re-reading and rewriting. Friel's theatre invites audiences to examine the sources of their sympathies and loyalties and their understanding of them. Involving audiences in the critical examination of individual and socio-cultural differences (past and present), Friel, through a poetics of fracture, brings into focus the inextricable relations among language, identity and national self-realisation, identifying the inescapable fact that in Ireland the most significant agent of change has been the English language.

This thesis does not try to place Friel's theatre 'above' history, nor is it possible for Friel to avoid his own historical reality. But it is possible to demonstrate how he negotiates this, remembering and re-membering the past and projecting possibilities of change. Plays such as *Translations* (1980) and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990), and his translations of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1981) and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* (1987) and *A Month in the Country* (1992), record past struggles for a just society; the Russian plays, recast in an Hiberno English idiom, contest the validity for Irish audiences of 'standard' English translations and indeed the contentious concepts such as 'standard translations'. These, he argues, encourage a posture of colonial attentiveness rather than foregrounding the Russians' enquiries into radical change and social upheaval. Re-appropriating these texts, Friel displaces 'standard' English with Hiberno English in variants which assert an aesthetic independence.

This thesis argues that because language gains meaning in relation to its social, political and cultural context, it is artificial to evaluate Friel's translations as ideological, 'orthodox' or 'authentic' translations. More productive, and the thrust of this thesis, is to examine Friel's critique of the influence of the English discourse in Ireland and its role in cultural formations.

But their proposition, the necessity for aesthetic decolonisation, like the prevailing political situation, gains meaning only when accorded a position of relevance. Accordingly, the interpretation and positioning of Friel's enterprise remain open to debate.

A new version of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* by Brian Friel (from a literal translation provided by Uná ní Dhubhghaill and specifically commissioned by Michael Colgan, Artistic Director of the Gate Theatre, Dublin) was produced at the Gate in September 1998. Space and time have not permitted me to comment upon this latest translation but clearly Friel's enterprise continues.

In transliterating Russian I have followed, in general, the same system as that used by the *Slavonic and East European Review*, but I have spelt the Russian names according to the translations that I refer to or quote from even though this leads to some inconsistencies.

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<sup>1</sup>. Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*. Paris: Fayard, 1988. 26-27.

**Abstract**

This thesis is concerned with the ‘decolonisation of the imagination’ as represented in two original plays by Brian Friel and his three translations of Chekhov and Turgenev. In various ways these five works reflect upon contemporary Irish experience and the history which influenced it. The study focuses upon Friel’s strategies of decolonisation, particularly the role of translation as enquiry in relation to human communication and understanding, and explores how the language of his plays contributes to a proposed aesthetic independence of the Irish. I maintain that Friel’s advocacy of a critical aesthetic of differences has not been adequately recognised by critical authorities. This assertion is developed throughout the analysis of these five plays, which examine recurring paradigms, and forces of change.

In 1980, Friel’s dramatic grasp of the conflict engendered by inherited and imposed paradigms found its fullest expression in *Translations*. Dealing with the forces of change, and especially the effect of the English language and the comprehensive re-naming of Irish localities, *Translations* suggests that the wasting of the local represents the wasting of a national being unless, through transformation, accommodation of differences is embraced.

Intent upon encouraging aesthetic independence and a critical climate within which to interrogate the contemporary crisis in Ireland, and privileging Hiberno-English over ‘standard’ English, Friel re-presented the enquiries of Chekhov and Turgenev into conflict engendered by change. Then, examining the same forces in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Friel created a play showing an affinity with Chekhov but radical in its critique of and departure from the Irish dramatic tradition and fundamental Irish values.

Friel maintains that English aesthetic conventions (including the notion of ‘standard’ English), while rich in themselves, are redundant in relation to Irish experience and counter to independent Irish representation. How he proceeds to re-appropriate Chekhov and Turgenev from ‘standard’ English conventions, re-creating them as ‘stepping stones’ in a decolonisation process, forms not only an important part of this thesis but also part of the wider recension of the writing of Ireland.

**List of Play titles and Abbreviations used in thesis**

<i>Philadelphia, Here I Come!</i> (1964)	(PH)
<i>The Loves of Cass McGuire</i> (1966)	
<i>Lovers</i> (1967)	
<i>The Mundy Scheme</i> (1969)	
<i>The Gentle Island</i> (1971)	
<i>The Freedom of the City</i> (1973)	
<i>Volunteers</i> (1975)	
<i>Living Quarters</i> (1977)	
<i>Aristocrats</i> (1979)	
<i>Faith Healer</i> (1979)	(FH)
<i>Translations</i> (1980)	(T)
<i>Three Sisters</i> (1981)	(TS)
<i>The Communication Cord</i> (1982)	(CC)
<i>Fathers and Sons</i> (1987)	(FS)
<i>Making History</i> (1988)	
<i>Dancing at Lughnasa</i> (1990)	(DL)
<i>A Month in the Country</i> (1992)	(MC)
<i>Wonderful Tennessee</i> (1993)	
<i>Molly Sweeney</i> (1994)	
<i>Give Me Your Answer, Do!</i> (1997)	(GAD)

**Introduction**

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Everywhere in the mentality of the Irish people are flux and uncertainty. Our national consciousness may be described, in a native phrase, as a quaking sod. It gives no footing. It is not English, nor Irish, nor Anglo-Irish ... (Daniel Corkery)<sup>1</sup>

Many are beginning to recognise the right of the individual mind to see the world in its own way, to cherish the thoughts which separate men from one another ... instead of those thoughts that had made one man like another if they could, and have but succeeded in setting up hysteria and insincerity in place of confidence and self-possession. (W. B. Yeats)<sup>2</sup>

I ... call attention to the illogical position of men who drop their own language to speak English, of men who translate their euphonious Irish names into English monosyllables, of men who read English books and know nothing about Gaelic literature, nevertheless protesting as a matter of sentiment that they hate the country which at every hand's turn they rush to imitate. ... We will become, what, I fear, we are largely at present, a nation of imitators, the Japanese of Western Europe, lost to the power of native initiative and alive only to second-hand assimilation ... what the battleaxe of the Dane, the sword of the Norman, the wile of the Saxon were unable to perform, we have accomplished ourselves. (Douglas Hyde)<sup>3</sup>

## i tracts and translations

As a result of imperial colonisation and internal colonialism<sup>4</sup>, disintegration and fragmentation have long been part of Ireland's history so that, in a crucial sense, Irish culture experienced modernity before its time.<sup>5</sup> Imperialism, territorial and linguistic subjugation brought about a plantation situation and a socio-political system perpetrated through language, resulting in imbalance and dislocation for those without choice in the matter through subordination to an alien authority.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence of this historic colonisation and subsequent political developments (including bifurcation) identity (individual, cultural and communal) has been influenced by politics driven by a sense of division (rather than differences) and manifest in hegemonic nationalist paradigms of Republicanism and Unionism. In what became Northern Ireland, both populations have been mobilised within *competing* nationalisms: cultural Catholics have consistently voted and fought for the retention of a united autonomous or independent Ireland, while cultural Protestants have consistently voted and fought for the retention of the Union with Great Britain.<sup>7</sup> These competing nationalisms have motivated and distinguished republican and loyalist paramilitaries. In Ireland the national question has effected the major cleavage separating the dominant political party blocks since 1921; and it has severely polarised the communities in Northern Ireland from 1969 until the present day.



Northern Ireland's internal political development since the 1920s has been crucially affected by British and Irish state-building and nation-building failures, intended and unintended. Successive British governments have failed to incorporate Irish Catholics in the emergent British nation-state, while the Irish Free State's political development minimised its attractiveness to Ulster Protestants. Since the division of Ireland, British constitutional arrangements have enabled the Ulster Unionist Party to establish a system of domination over the minority (manifest in the constitutional crisis of 1972 and continuing to the present). The constitutional architecture of the Irish Republic has remained inimical to a politics of accommodation with regard to Northern Ireland.

Ireland's colonial struggle is neither isolated nor insoluble.<sup>8</sup> As the work of Brian Friel demonstrates, the processes involved require re-reading, not least the politics of translation and cultural production and the politics of identity and language inscribing Ireland. And while textual strategies of representation (such as plays) must not be confused with the actual hierarchies of power, Friel's plays encourage a commitment towards comprehending the systems that organise life at every level. Implicitly his work rejects any socio-sectarian politics of identity (of essence) and concomitantly asserts the rights and autonomy of aesthetic and cultural efforts (and representations) to enquire into the absence of an egalitarian society.

Everything, Friel insists, needs to be re-read not in terms of the rival claims of tradition<sup>9</sup> and modernity and the resulting opposing ideologies but between their divisive lines, so that new psychic and social space can be created wherein differences can be celebrated.<sup>10</sup> And while he promotes the creation of such space within the confines of his theatre, Friel recognises that its manifestation lies in the hands of his constituents (as he calls his audiences), their attitudes and expectations.<sup>11</sup>

A decade after the declaration of independence, Daniel Corkery's anxious words<sup>12</sup> (above) confirm the ties between cultural and political consciousness<sup>13</sup> and reinforce those of Yeats and Douglas Hyde, calling attention to the absence of self-realisation and the dangers of colonial mimicry or *shoneenism*.<sup>14</sup> More recently writers such as Terence Brown and Edward W. Said maintain that the narrative process is inextricably bound up with the wider socio-political processes. Said terms this interconnectedness as the 'site' and the 'somewhere' of inscription, to be uncovered in the interpretative process. Samuel Beckett's caution that 'the danger is in the neatness of identifications', remains valid<sup>15</sup> and, to some extent, informs the work of Brian Friel and his vision of impermanence. Friel states:

The generation of Irish writers before mine ... learned to speak Irish, ... took their genetic purity for granted, and soldiered on. For us today the

situation is more complex. We are more concerned with defining our Irishness than with pursuing it. We want to know what the word native means, what the word foreign means and we want to know if the words have any meaning at all. Persistent considerations like these erode the old certainties and help clear the building site.<sup>16</sup>

As the prefacing extracts suggest, and as Friel affirms, the rite of self-location, a struggle effected through language (self-location) can be traumatic but meaningful because unfinalised. In Irish terms, the word 'unfinalised' suggests something of the complexity of colonisation and its unruly offspring, hybridity,<sup>17</sup> signified in Yeats's statement that while Gaelic was his native tongue, it was not his 'mother tongue.'<sup>18</sup> By its nature, hybridisation produces a residue that resists incorporation but that also creates new space for a politics of negotiation as opposed to negation. The (prefacing) extracts by Hyde, Corkery and Yeats, re-read by Beckett and Friel, stress the cultural contraction and psychological attenuation inherent in assuming an imitative posture, dangers identified by, among others, Said and Ngûgî wa Thiong'o.<sup>19</sup> All of these writers comment on the layered but ever-evolving nature of social and cultural formations and how these affect the attitudes of individuals. They encourage renewal through critical re-reading of the network of literary-socio-political processes (including translation) effecting representation, the 'somewhere' as Said puts it, of inscription (1983 26-53). Underlying their statements is a common recognition of the power of language to inscribe and express subjectivity and its inextricable relationship to land and self-location. That Friel explores the dynamics of social change and the conflicts of his audiences while offering no agenda but encouraging wider possibilities than those offered by the established ideologies, marks the difference between him and Yeats, Corkery and Hyde. This difference places him interrogatively in relation to their political and literary nationalisms while revealing how his work encourages a reorientation in Irish self-location and cultural production (akin to that of Chekhov and Turgenev), one alert to possibilities of change and capable of legitimating cultural differences – not the lost territory of cultural essence. Accordingly, Friel's translations of Chekhov and Turgenev refuse the exclusionary politics of identity and cultural production encoded in 'standard' English translations. Through re-appropriation and re-interpretation of non-Irish material for Irish audiences they contribute to the process of decolonisation, provoking questions about the condition of Ireland which 'standard' English and American versions and interpretations do not facilitate. In a remark wholly indicative of the contentious concept of a 'standard translation', the English translator, Michael Frayn, commenting upon the task of the translator in his introduction to *The Cherry Orchard*, stated that, 'the proper translation of a line of dialogue is what that particular character would have said at that particular moment if he had been a native English-

speaker.<sup>20</sup> Friel challenges the assumptions embedded in such thinking and, through alterations that reference Irish experience, he opens up new space, a cultural forum wherein a language of enquiry and dialogue among differences and ‘paradigms of possibility,’<sup>21</sup> (of change) seeks to replace the politics of division, dominance and negation. As Friel himself tells us, ‘we’ve got to keep questioning until we find ... some kind of generosity that can embrace the whole island.’<sup>22</sup>

## ii the action and reaction of the contemporary Irish tradition

The literary inheritance of Brian Friel and his contemporaries, ‘gapped, discontinuous and polyglot,’ has its roots in an ancient oral tradition.<sup>23</sup> Its contemporary growth, however, is a response to the crisis of modernisation that Ireland faced at the turn of the century, attempting to map out connections between the past and its repressed heritage in the face of the oncoming ‘filthy modern tide’ (Yeats) and the effects of the division of Ireland.<sup>24</sup>

The spread and divergence of the several revivalist treatises had complex socio-political underpinnings. Their cultural impact made possible the political revolution by creating a new ideal of Ireland, with the revival literature providing what might be called ‘the secret history’ of the Irish revolution.<sup>25</sup> But whereas revivalist narratives such as those of Yeats and Hyde gravitated towards the essentialist idea of recovering a lost wholeness, and might be described, paradoxically, as ‘revivalist modernism’, the narratives of Joyce and Beckett exemplify an attitude which may be described as ‘radical modernism.’ The work of subsequent writers such as Friel and Heaney reflects a transition crisis and hence might be described as ‘mediational modernism.’<sup>26</sup> This third and most recent set of narratives examines the ideological geography, the ‘somewhere’ (the socio-political relations) inscribed in both previous mappings. Indicating its sense of fluidity rather than arrival, Heaney calls his writing ‘journeywork’ while Friel describes his as ‘passageworks of excavation and clearing’, examining ‘man in society, in conflict with community, government, academy, church, family - and essentially in conflict with himself.’<sup>27</sup> Such conflict, like the poetics themselves, is related to the socio-political relations and paradigms, including bifurcation, that have structured Irish life and values. The narrative impulse behind Friel’s and Heaney’s work is to dismantle the manufactured oppositions and mediate across the resulting split, re-reading the past and the present and bringing them into refractory play. The recognition of the need for such dialogue distinguishes the work of Friel and Heaney and is encapsulated in works such as *Translations* (1980) and *Sweeney Astray* (1983) and *The Cure at Troy* (1990).<sup>28</sup>

### iii Friel's 'Necessary Uncertainty'

Through a poetics of fracture, using multiple perspectives, memory, music, movement, gaps and silences, Friel interrogates the difference between what is said and what is meant and understood by placing the burden of translation (interpretation and understanding) upon his audiences. This task involves recognition of the partial and ambivalent nature of language and the specific implication of any utterance in a performative or institutional strategy.<sup>29</sup> Translation, in Friel's hands, is not a matter of re-wording the 'original', enunciating the authority of the 'classic' but an instrument of cultural and political enquiry into and resistance to its authority, production and reproduction, and its relevance to the present. It is not about 'truths immemorially posited' (*T* 418) but what he calls the 'Necessary Uncertainty' (*GAD* 80) that lies between words and meaning, their production and reception.<sup>30</sup>

Such use of dialogue, perhaps, had its beginnings in the late nineteenth century with Chekhov and Maeterlinck, and it has superficial links with Pinter. Friel, however, affirms the possibilities of communication and the value of uncertainty. In common with Beckett, he rejects fixed identifications and definitions, arguing that an understanding of contemporary realities involves an awareness of social and cultural formation as layered but open-ended, a developmental process necessarily available to re-reading and re-evaluation. Like Beckett, he insists that only by questioning can the dangers of paradigmatic nostalgia for lost origins and sacrosanct certainties, detrimental to the exploration of social realities in contemporary Ireland, be avoided. This is the argument he dramatises in *Translations* (1980), extends with his three Russian adaptations and revoices in *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990). Such an enterprise involves recognition that the past is part of the evolving present and as such open to re-thinking and change. To what extent cultural forms (such as poems or plays) can prefigure or transform political initiatives, in the sense of interrogating the relationship between the ethico-political identity and the ethical ends of such enterprises, remains a recurring enquiry of Friel.

As Luke Gibbons suggests, subjected to prolonged colonisation that sought not only military but cultural submission, the culture and material representation of Ireland acquired an edge, in that to engage in cultural activity in circumstances where one's culture was being effaced or obliterated, or even to assert the existence of a civilisation prior to conquest, was to make a political statement.<sup>31</sup> For this reason, the successive affirmations of Irish culture since the early seventeenth century, including the cultural revival of the eighteenth century, the romantic nationalism of the nineteenth and the Literary Revival and its aftermath in the

twentieth, have assumed a political cast.<sup>32</sup> This is not to argue a culturalist explanation of Ireland's political geography, its antagonisms, political violence and constitutional stalemate. These issues are so inter-related that no single facet can be used to fully explain the others. Friel's plays explore these dynamics through the themes of identity, language, loss, frustration, repression and dysfunctional relationships, questioning their construction.<sup>33</sup> How Friel's work is received, interpreted and pedagogically examined, forms an important part of this thesis and provides fertile grounds for my re-reading and assertion that Friel's translations, in particular, can only be estimated in relation, primarily, to their theatrical communicative efficiency and its effect on audiences, and in relation to the wider body of his drama.

Without polemic, Friel persistently considers questions of identity and land, community and conflict, asking whether these issues are caused or causal. Refusing to accept irresolution and stalemate, his plays re-read the inherited paradigms and the layered (or inflected) language that carries them, illustrating the commonality of causes and symptoms, of confusion and the desire to belong to a community that will protect and sustain all individuals.

Throughout this thesis, it is argued that Friel's drama examines this sense of confusion and conflict, personal and political and asks how it is constructed. By making visible the universal in the personal, the commonality of our gapped condition, Friel's plays catch individuals as in snapshots, between limited self-knowledge and unknowing, and provoke dialogue because he recognises that silence and violence kill the desire for communication and communion. By interrogating the relationship between origin, authority and political agency, Friel's plays, and in particular his translations, examine the making of divisions and encourage strategies of self-location and self-locution. Friel has commented that 'out of the cultural state, a possibility of a political state follows. That is always the sequence.'<sup>34</sup>

#### **iv the contemporary setting**

In Ireland, the politics of identity have produced political divisions perpetuating stereotypical nationalist ideologies articulated along ethnic and sectarian lines.<sup>35</sup> One consequence of this is that the real basis of the present economic and social struggle in Ireland has been obscured and mystified by the insistent repetitiveness of Irish history itself. The 'fighting Irish' are explained away with persuasive Spenserian-Arnoldian insinuations that the reasons for this repetitiveness lie in the nature of Irish identity. This mystification is inherent

in the cultural and aesthetic thinking which dominates both the Irish and the English traditions so that the apparent freedom from politics in the aesthetic realm is, in itself, a political lie. Only in recent years has the psychic and cultural vacuum caused by colonisation, stereotyping, the Great Famine, migration and emigration been examined in terms of its residual impact and continued relevance. In the wake of the Famine came the demise of Gaelic, a community-based vernacular culture and education system, a dislocation further accelerated by the psychically impoverishing effects of emigration. Into the vacuum left by this vanished Ireland, and with Catholic Emancipation, a new type of Catholicism took hold, providing the people with an alternative language of identity, Roman Catholicism, imported from bourgeois France, Italy and England. In tandem with the new religion came the development of the Gaelic League and the Revivalists' 'translation' of the arts into Anglo-Irish. The Revivalists, however, fabricated the pre-colonial culture of Ireland as unified and continuous, ultimately hegemonic, instead of gapped, discontinuous and polyglot, further compounding the post-Famine psychic sense of loss and dislocation. Thus, through a politics of essence, the potential of the arts to celebrate cultural differences became involved in both the efficacy and the contradictions of aesthetic and political culture. In effect, the rhetoric of compensation espoused by the Revivalists<sup>36</sup> and post-1916 governments,<sup>37</sup> invented an Ireland to which there could be no return. This is challenged by Friel with his Russian plays, *Translations*, and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, all of which examine the rival claims of tradition and modernity, the contradictions of a unified culture and the struggle for a just society.

For almost three decades now, life in contemporary Ireland has been sucked dry of meaning, pattern (in the largest sense) and, for many, of worth. The situation in the North of Ireland is an example of the consequences of colonialism as the imperial tide ebbs and the angle of vision changes and the re-ordering begins. On another level, it is the bloody consequence of internal and external misgovernment, sectional and sectarian, with factions carrying out acts of barbarism in the name of political principle and heroism. As the cultural history of Ireland testifies, in words, print and performance, aesthetic form can significantly alter and shape the ways in which we make sense of our lives. Poetry did indeed make things happen in Ireland, though Yeats may well have over-estimated his contribution to the processes of decolonisation, since the Rising of 1916 was inevitable, its dynamism producing a flood of literature, and cultural and political activity that led to the rise of the Republic and the division of Ireland.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, for culture to be effective as 'equipment for living', in Kenneth Burke's phrase, it has to be grounded in the material conditions of society. Through its self-

referentiality, culture, like tradition, does not transcend its social and political circumstances; it is part of them. Dominated for centuries by colonialist elitism and subsequently by bourgeois-nationalist elitism, Ireland, as a modern state, continues to be complicated by the residue of imperialism. In the Celticism of Matthew Arnold, for example, Irish identity was reduced to an imaginary cultural aspect, in a restricted aesthetic sense. Irish identity, for Arnold, was marked by child-like traits that rendered the Irish incapable of self-determination. Accordingly, any resistance they displayed had nothing to do with the subjects of an imperial power attempting to become citizens in the real world.<sup>39</sup> The radical politicisation of culture during the Literary Revival has been interpreted by some as a rejection of Arnold's dominant prescription. But the Revivalists, far from repudiating Celticism, encouraged an equally ethereal twilight aesthetic, one which valorised peasant society, despite its obvious hardship, in the face of encroaching modernity.

Independence in 1922 split Ireland geographically and successive governments did little to address the sense of fracture and contradictions endemic to everyday Irish experience — both North and South. In 1933 Eamon de Valera outlined the programme of *Fianna Fail* as

restoring the unity of Ireland and securing its independence, ... placing as many families as possible upon the land so that the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the houses we live in, and the articles in common daily use in the lives of our people may all, as far as is reasonably possible, be produced by Irish labour from Irish material. Ireland united, Ireland Free, Ireland self-supporting and self-reliant, Ireland speaking her own tongue and through it giving to the world the ancient treasures of Christian Gaelic culture — these are the ideals.<sup>40</sup>

Propagated through Church and State, such paradigms of self-sufficient independence posed as unificatory and generated a politics of identity that talked about unity but ignored the necessity for accommodation of differences. Hence while a nationalist culture may gesture about overcoming differences in the name of unity, the continuing sense of fracture and dislocation in Ireland is a violent and contradictory reality. It confirms the tragic fallibility of a politics of identity which talks about unity whilst hesitating to bring about the realisation of justice and freedom. This is the tragedy apparent in *The Freedom of the City* and Friel's version of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, plays which signpost the necessity and value of competing translations.

Nevertheless for an understanding of the divided geography of Ireland (the Irish Free State<sup>41</sup> of twenty-six counties and Northern Ireland comprising six counties) and its cultures, two facts must be considered. The first is that Northern Ireland is a conflict zone shared by two communities that have grown antagonistic. The second is that the conflict has been influenced in a number of ways by exogenous agents, and particularly by Great Britain and

the Republic. Consequently, in considering any aspect of culture and representation in Ireland, colonialism and its consequences have to be borne in mind, especially as they impinge on the deeply contested issues of cultural and national identity.

In the period after 1920, a form of internal colonialism and ethno-national conflict developed in the North of Ireland.<sup>42</sup> Different forms of nationalism were developed along oppositional and sectarian lines and have been used as forces of political legitimacy.<sup>43</sup> In Northern Ireland, Unionism is the political manifestation of Protestantism and has been used by bourgeois politicians as a means of uniting Protestants and dividing them from Catholics along sectarian lines.<sup>44</sup> The resulting inequities have been supported by the governments of Stormont and London, unchallenged by Dublin, and manifested in the violence of the past three decades. Thus the disintegration and fragmentation apparent in Ireland and the origins of the conflict in Northern Ireland lie in the country's prolonged colonisation and particularly the historic settlement of Ulster. As indicated above, this is not an insoluble situation but one that requires critical re-reading of the oppositional paradigms inhibiting understanding and re-definition. In the post-1922 period the emergent Nationalist politics in the South, and Unionist politics in the North, found a society profoundly marked by what Bakhtin would term heteroglossia, a situation of explosive centripetal and centrifugal forces. Out of this collision the two governments proceeded to construct monologic forms in order to forge a dialogic resistance, to Republican Nationalist claims on the one hand, and to British imperialism on the other.

A world and culture apart, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues that the crucial issue is the *space* constituted for the citizen-subject in the post-colonial nation not only by the languages but also by the institutional and cultural forms bequeathed by the departing coloniser (1986: 4-9; 90-94). In this sense, all representation is political in that it has the transformative capacity to bring about enquiry and change in society. Edward Said affirms this when he says that 'the realities of power and authority — as well as the resistance offered by men, women and social movements to institutions, authorities and orthodoxies — are the realities that make texts possible, that deliver them to their readers, that solicit the attention of critics' (1983 5).

Brian Friel (born in 1929) maintains that 'a culture must be able to hold its contradictions and accommodate differences while never ceasing to require freedom and justice for all.'<sup>45</sup> In 1972, in an interview in the journal *Aquarius*, he said: 'I hope that between now and my death I will have acquired a religion, a philosophy, a sense of life, that will make the end less frightening than it appears to me at this moment.'<sup>46</sup> These words may



reflect Friel's personal pursuit of 'equipment for living' but overall both interviews reflect both a horror of the prevailing violence and a lack of faith in political leadership, North and South. The plays written by him over the subsequent twenty years chart Friel's pursuit of 'equipment for living' in the face of a continuing lack of freedom and justice which contributes to fragmentation in Ireland. They demonstrate his belief that the forms of representation, whether in politics, economics, the individual or the arts, are inter-related and his recognition that this dialectic, concerning the processes of language in Ireland, is complex and unfinalised.

#### v communion through struggle

Friel's theatre examines communication and its frequent failure to mediate between the personal and ideological. The tension between these frequently entails an examination of socio-cultural differences and authority reflected in language and involving a torsion between stasis and change. As early as 1964 this struggle was dramatised in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* where, on the eve of his departure for the New World, Private Gar O'Donnell verbalises what Public Gar hesitates to express. Hovering over the ritual game of draughts between his father and the local Canon, Private Gar explodes:

you're warm and kind and soft and sympathetic - all things to all men — because you can translate all this loneliness, this groping, this dreadful bloody buffoonery into Christian terms that will make life bearable for us all. And yet you don't say a word. Why Canon? Why, arid Canon? Isn't this your job? — to translate? Why don't you speak, then? Prudence, arid Canon? Prudence be damned! Christianity isn't prudent - it's insane!<sup>47</sup>

Gar's words fall on the deaf ears of 'faith' and father. In fact, much of the communication in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* is, like this fragment, *dialogue des sourds*. The Public Gar ignores his own Private recognitions. In Friel's dramas, the gap between what is said and meant and what is understood, always remains great.

The means Friel offers of identifying this gap is translation, which becomes both paradigmatic of the larger issue of the inter-connectedness *and* difference between cultures, and evidence of the problems and limitations of translation, *tradditore/traduttore*, discovery *and* betrayal. This is the axiomatic insight underlying *Translations* — that all reconstitution carries an inherently problematic echo of the structure interrogated and that the relationship between language and performance (or use) is, necessarily, an ongoing process. Seamus Deane acknowledges that 'translation is founded on the idea of loss and recuperation', but suggests that 'it might be understood as an action that takes place in the interval between

these alternatives.’ ‘This conception,’ he believes, ‘lies at the heart of much Irish writing, especially in the modern period, and has of course affinities with the modern theories of writing as a practice.’<sup>48</sup>

From the 1970s onwards, Deane maintains that communication and the lie of language as singular and under individual control became the focus of Friel’s theatre, which scrutinises proverbial illusions of pastoralism and inviolable ancestral pieties and comments upon the prevailing personal and socio-political disintegration frequently grounded in a failure of communication and understanding.<sup>49</sup> This blend of past and present, personal and social crisis, is apparent in plays such as *The Gentle Island* (1971), *The Freedom of the City* (1973), *Volunteers* (1975), *Living Quarters* (1977), *Aristocrats* (1979), *Faith Healer* (1979), *Translations* (1980), *Making History* (1988), *Dancing At Lughnasa* (1990) and *Molly Sweeney* (1994). These plays share not only a focus upon personal and social interrelations but also a common preoccupation with communication, with the disintegration of traditional authority and the repressive channel through which it operates — language.<sup>50</sup>

Communication in Friel’s plays (like the dynamics of translation itself) is represented as a struggle between the forces of fixity and stasis on the one hand, and change and diversity on the other. Both his original plays and his translations ultimately show that this struggle is necessary for the continual emergence of diverse new meanings. The struggle into communication is reflected through multiple perspectives which, like distorting mirrors, show the plurality endemic in everyday experience. Such a situation is intensified where the ‘same’ language is used but its cultural loadings are diverse and it is based upon different presuppositions. ‘The assumption ... is that we speak the same language as England. And we don’t,’ Friel states.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, for Friel, every situation requires translation. His three Russian plays do exactly this, re-presenting the polyphonic works of Chekhov and Turgenev and idiomatically highlighting Irish, English language differences and the influence of English in Ireland. Thus the plays are performances of differences and of resistance (as well as re-appropriation), drawing attention to the historical socio-political interface between literatures and languages and how these (and other) borders are configured. Re-reading his own tradition, Friel takes ‘the dreaming, the torturing, heartscalding, never-satisfying dreaming’ of Shaw, the drunken refusals of reality by Synge’s Flaherty and O’Casey’s Paycock and, like poet Seamus Heaney, he insists, ‘stop just licking your wounds. Start seeing things.’

Required to ‘start seeing things’, audiences recognise that it is not that characters’ multiple and shifting perspectives are untruthful. Rather, their truths, like the official and other

codes that carry them, are in conflict. This is graphically achieved in the wide-angle lens plays, *The Freedom of the City*, *Translations* and *Making History* and, equally, in the more concentrated three-hander works, *Faith Healer* and *Molly Sweeney*. In both dramatic forms, Friel *shows* the alienation inherent in language, indicating that, nevertheless, ambiguity is part of linguistic abundance and growth. In a Cubist-like idiom, such representation is anti-monolingualistic and, like translation, admits a proliferation of meaning. Given representation, this struggle into communication, this sense of plurality and fracture, contests the hegemony of a single and unitary view or official language, or a single or superior cultural field. Such a theatre poses questions relentlessly and requires us to 'think twice', to 'start seeing things.' *The Freedom of the City*<sup>52</sup>, *Translations*<sup>53</sup>, *Making History* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*<sup>54</sup>, in particular, explore reified tropes (for example, the authority of Church and State) and the making of supposedly true myths (of a Gaelic pastoral or a unified culture). These plays show audiences that their histories are selectively atavistic; that in Ireland, as elsewhere, words and writing carry the given and often competing evaluations of others but that the absence of self-critical currents has fostered a politics of polarity and disabling mythologies such as Arnold's Celticism or the equally damning nationalist idea that Irish speech and writing, without the Gaelic language, will never recover and will remain handicapped in relation to English.<sup>55</sup> But, whereas Friel (who is not a Gaelic speaker but remembers his grandparents as native-speaking) acknowledges that language in Ireland has been 'wilfully contrived', nevertheless, he replaces the nationalist 'never' with the axiomatic possibilities of change — of translation.<sup>56</sup>

The groundwork for this enterprise was laid in *Translations*, a play that demonstrates Friel's awareness of the inherent lie of language as singular and the contraries or ambiguities of translation, *tradditore/traduttore*. By dramatising the paradox of translation, Friel confronts the given, dismantling polarising pieties of all persuasions, and encourages a re-reading of fundamental Irish values.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, few critics have acknowledged that with *Translations*, Friel affirms that the Irish use of the English language need not be a permanent disability since enquiry and change can bring about a language of variance *and* agreement. As indicated earlier, in 1980, Friel stated, 'We've got to keep questioning ... until we find some kind of generosity that can embrace the whole island.' He affirmed that a movement towards self-reference and self-location is gaining momentum,<sup>58</sup> summarising this in several interviews as 'finding voice in a language not our own' and 'talking to ourselves.'<sup>59</sup>

## vi Field Day — theory and practice

Such comments are not veiled ethnocentricity. They are indicative of the innovatory ethos which informed the plays and pamphlets of Field Day, founded by Friel and actor, Stephen Rea, in 1980, with *Translations* as their inaugural production. Their professed aim was to ‘contribute to the solution of the present crisis in Ireland by producing analyses of the given myths, stereotypes and attitudes which had become both a symptom and a cause of the current situation,’ to ‘keep questioning’ and to ‘build a body of work which establishes something different from the received English view.’<sup>60</sup> Towards this end, in its opening years, Field Day produced four original plays by Irish writers — Friel’s *Translations* and *The Communication Cord*, Thomas Kilroy’s *Double Cross*, and Stewart Parker’s *Pentecost* — with four works of non-Irish origin, translated to the Irish stage — Chekhov’s *Three Sisters* (adapted by Friel), Molière’s *L’Écroule des maris* (adapted by Derek Mahon as *High Time*), Sophocles’ *Antigone* (adapted by Tom Paulin as *The Riot Act*), and Athol Fugard’s *Boesman and Lena*. As Eamonn Hughes indicates, these plays, together with the acknowledgement in the pamphlets of intellectual discourses beyond Ireland, demonstrate one of Field Day’s great strengths, the recognition that it is necessary to look *beyond* Ireland in order to examine the condition of Ireland.<sup>61</sup>

Within the shadows of the current constitutional crisis, Friel and his Field Day co-directors became convinced that everything, including the politics and the literature of Ireland, had to be re-read.<sup>62</sup> This central concern with re-reading linguistic codes and inscription was manifest in successive Field Day pamphlets and plays (original and adaptations), questioning the notion of a set or standard code of language and the construction of identity. Speaking for Field Day, Seamus Deane described its intention as ‘cultural excavation’, enabling ‘new writing, new politics, unblemished by Irishness, but securely Irish.’<sup>63</sup> Deane’s metaphor echoes Friel’s statements about decolonisation and affirms Said’s insight that ‘there is no such thing as a merely given, or simply available, starting point’, that everything is written from ‘somewhere’ and that ‘beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to enable what follows from them’ (1985 16). (The endeavours of Field Day have been comprehensively documented by Marilynn J. Richtarik in her study *Acting Between the Lines*).<sup>64</sup>

Accordingly, with *Translations* Friel calls for ‘a grammar of constant renewal’ which will enable the Irish to move ahead, leaving exclusivist and incarcerating myths behind.<sup>65</sup> Like Synge and Joyce before him, Friel contemplates, in *Translations*, the power and possible alienation inherent in language; how the word can become ‘fact’ through the power of a lie

and how translation, without reciprocity, can fail to deliver meaning. 'In some ways', he observes:

the inherited images of 1916, or 1690, control and rule our lives much more profoundly than the historical truth of what happened on those two occasions ... The complication ... of that problem is how do we come to terms with it using an English language? ... For example, is our understanding of the Siege of Derry going to be determined by MacCauley's history of it, or is our understanding of Parnell going to be determined by Lyon's portrait of Parnell?

His conclusion, indicative of the Field Day ethos, is that 'this is a matter which will require a type of eternal linguistic vigilance.'<sup>66</sup>

The Company, Michael Etherton writes, wants 'to revitalize Irish literature and criticism by finding completely new ways of talking about the problems of Ireland.'<sup>67</sup> Those who have joined the Field Day Company or written or edited publications for its publishing arm, include Terence Brown, Ann Colman, Seamus Deane, Máirín Ní Dhonnacadha, Theo Dorgan, Terry Eagleton, Marianne Elliott, Michael Farrell, Luke Gibbons, Trevor Griffiths, David Hammond, Seamus Heaney, Frederic Jameson, Eanna Mulloy, Medbh McGuckian, Derek Mahon, R.L. McCartney, Patrick J. McGrory, Frank McGuinness, Tom Paulin, Edward Said and Kevin Whelan. This list (unlike the Goldsmith to Behan lineage so often used to contextualise or contain Friel within an Irish tradition that is itself undergoing deconstruction) is an accurate indication of the company Friel keeps and its concerns. When Friel states, 'We want to know what the word native means, what the word foreign means and we want to know if the words have any meaning at all', he encapsulates the common core of these writers' concerns.<sup>68</sup> They investigate the mechanisms that construct, signify and organise individuals within a culture and society. They insist that the cultural paradigms which shape that condition are inter-related but unfinalised, since through critical re-reading they remain open to re-definition.

This claim is substantiated by rewritings of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* by Friel and by Frank McGuinness (for Field Day in 1981 and 1990 respectively). McGuinness states that his 'version of *Three Sisters* was a deliberate attempt to give a company of Irish actors a version of Chekhov that respected their Hiberno English speech and to allow them a freedom of theatrical discourse which 'standard' English translations of European classical dramas den[y] Irish performers.'<sup>69</sup> In interview, Donal McCann (who played Dr. Shpigelsky in the 1992 Gate production of Friel's version of Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*) stated that he believes Friel's translations 'centre around the endless differences and constant change that

vitalise all language ... [and] are part of a whole just as each short story in *Dubliners* is part of a larger comment on insular attitudes and prejudices' in contemporary Ireland.

As I will demonstrate, in varying degrees, the same endeavour applies to all three of Friel's Russian plays. They illustrate that linguistic hybridity can be a source of richness and renewal and all the more liberating in Ireland, where the efficacy of political and economic structures (reflected in the underlying religious and cultural traditions) has made difference a matter of division rather than diversity.

Critiquing this situation and encouraging an understanding of the socio-political structures and myths which have contributed to such polarisation in Ireland, North *and* South, Friel publicly refuses to consider drama in programmatic terms.<sup>70</sup> The differences between the two cultural traditions are perceived by some as extending, historically, into virtually every aspect of life, politics, and interpretation of Irish history in the popular mind. To rebuke Friel for an absence, as some critics claim, of overt comment on the fact of sectarianism is to grossly over-simplify and under-estimate his intention. Asserting the right of self-locution, his plays repeatedly interrogate the colonialist assumption that there is an undeniable relationship between the use of the English language and civilisation, and between authority and justice.

Historically, the Irish literary tradition has drawn both on the Irish idiom and vernacular and on Anglo-European traditions in order to create a double-voiced culture. In the past, such doubling has, like Friel's use of multiple perspectives, functioned as a means of expressing difference, and of preserving psychic and cultural health. For a long time Hiberno English was considered as a compliant reflection of colonisation, and the rapid decline of Gaelic and the spread of English through the National schools in the nineteenth century appeared to confirm this colonial presumption. Nevertheless, since Penal times, Hiberno English has carried a complex system of codes to relay aesthetic and political messages to the subordinated communities. Numerous symbolic names, such as, 'the old woman', Cathleen ni Houlihan, 'Rose' or 'dark Rosaleen' were given to Ireland. Such encoding and semantic layering were necessary because, historically, the use of the English language in Ireland has been 'mono-glossic', serving to ignore and reduce political and cultural difference.<sup>71</sup> However, in its idiom and references, Friel's use of Hiberno English blatantly and confidently asserts difference.

## vii translating differences for 'the coming generations'<sup>72</sup>

Comprehensive studies of Friel's theatre, committed to a communion of differences, have been written by D.E.S. Maxwell, Richard Pine and Elmer Andrews, among others.<sup>73</sup> But, at a more popular level, many critics have yet to acknowledge the fact that Friel's work consistently encourages eschewing entrenched ideologies. Thus few critics have accepted that *Translations* acknowledges the impossibility of returning to some pristine Gaelic past and that the play presses the necessity of proceeding 'to interpret between privacies' (*T* 446) and making a 'new home' of the English language. It is indicative of the aesthetic independence of Friel and other writers associated with Field Day that, far from re-drawing or refurbishing the Gaelic past, their creative and critical works have actively contributed to our understanding of differences. In their original plays and pamphlets and their translations of works from Russia, France and ancient Greece, they illustrate a common enquiry, how to live a balanced life, and do so unapologetically in the vernacular.<sup>74</sup> On one level, these works can be seen as continuing the long line of translation and enquiry that has influenced the development of Irish literature (discussed in Chapter One). On another, they confirm an increasing critical climate in Ireland, voiced, among others, by Friel and Field Day. It was perhaps inevitable that though not a linguist, Friel would turn his attention to translation, its influence upon Irish discourse and, specifically, to interpreting the dialectic between 'standard' English and Hiberno English in relation to contemporary Irish experience.

As Michael Cronin indicates (and as is examined in Chapter One), in the post-1922 era, a definite politics of translation developed.<sup>75</sup> Seamus Deane suggests that Friel's translations are an extension of these politics since they facilitate not only Irish self-location but also a critical reterritorialisation of the works from established English translations and interpretations.<sup>76</sup> Like Cronin, Deane maintains that Irish aesthetic independence involves a re-reading of the cultural and political discourse and its position in relation to the dominant English cultural field.

In this field, translations of the plays of Chekhov (like the plays of Shakespeare) are used by academics and theatres for the promotion and defence of Anglo-European cultural and aesthetic values.<sup>77</sup> Friel's work reverses this process. In this sense his work is akin to other post-colonial appropriation and rewriting of canonical works. Friel considers that the use of 'standard' English or American translations is a practice which to be neither healthy nor valuable to the Irish since, as he maintains, translations must be adequate and relative to the contemporary situation. Accordingly, he re-writes in order to de-centre, re-position and re-present Chekhov's and Turgenev's work for Irish audiences.

Friel suggests that of all antecedents, the language of others may well have the strongest and most immediate effect on our lives. Accordingly, he believes that because language is a pervasive and inescapable influence on our communication and our conduct, understanding it is a matter of unending enquiry, of translation. In this sense, his 1981 version of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, his 1987 dramatisation of Ivan Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* and his 1992 version of Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, are free adaptations of the Russian works *and* translations of the complex dialectical relations between Hiberno English and 'standard' English.<sup>78</sup>

Since all translations are appropriations, Friel's translations become works of re-appropriation, contesting and displacing 'standard' English translations by enacting strategies of substitution, selection and invention in the medieval translatory manner observed by Douglas Hyde, William Bedell Stanford and Sheila Falconer.<sup>79</sup> By replacing 'standard' English with Hiberno English, these translations offer interpretations of the shift within the dialectical relationship between these two literary systems, Irish and English.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, I will show that they are performance-oriented translations (not system-oriented), expressed in a contemporary Irish context, because Friel recognises that idiom and evaluation are culture-bound and that misunderstandings arise when issues are discussed in the same language but with different postulates on which word-meaning is based.<sup>81</sup>

### viii enacting relations of political and cultural authority

Friel maintains that he rewrote the Russian works neither to eclipse 'standard' translations nor to measure the past against the present. Rather, he rewrote them out of a vital compulsion which he describes as a 'decolonisation of the imagination', his shorthand phrase for an ongoing cultural enterprise of re-reading formative influences in Ireland and redressing what could be described as a culture of self-repression; that is, of accepting the given, 'standard' English interpretations as a prelude to understanding the Russia of Turgenev and Chekhov in the context of contemporary Ireland.<sup>82</sup> Alert to the impossibility of conveying full meaning, Friel exploits this lack, enacting relations of political and cultural authority. Through alteration and invention, he maximises the significances and differences he finds, challenges the notion of definitive interpretations presumed by established 'standard' English translations, and questions their relevance for Irish audiences. In doing so, his translations interrogate past and residual relations between England and Ireland. In a manner akin, as Stanford observes, to that practiced by medieval translators and adapters for Irish cultural



enrichment, Friel plunders and re-appropriates but in order to promote Irish self-consciousness through critical decolonisation.<sup>83</sup>

Decolonisation, especially in terms of representation, involves dismantling the imperial myth of language as singular and fixed, and of identity as integrated since these notions deny the potential richness of variance and differences and hybridity. Through performance, Friel foregrounds the hybridised nature of contemporary Irish society and uses the Russian texts as historical synecdoche. Alert to the necessity of accommodation and the danger of essentialist nostalgia, Friel uses the idiomatic evidence of hybridisation to demonstrate differences. Hybridisation, as Homi Bhabha makes clear, provides a means of repoliticising in that it can be used as a process, captured in the hierarchic movement of assimilation, to re-appropriate representative space. Accordingly, Friel's texts, far from being 'stage Irish', illustrate the richness of variances, legitimising their *unevenness* and differences within a developmental structure. In this way he argues for self-location through self-location in Hiberno English. Privileging communicative relevance, he demonstrates the redundancy of the colonial posture of mimicry and avoids a racist construction implicit in many representations of national identity by validating differences. His methods offer a corrective to imperialist elitisms, English *and* Irish. His character alterations serve to indicate the enormity of the task of representing those (like the Irish) who have been dominated, interpreted and mediated by others through English discursive practices which disallow any evidence of hybridity. Indeed Friel has had to create a language for a class which never existed in Ireland — a nineteenth century estate-owning native society — an absence which, in itself, raises questions regarding equity and justice in Ireland's past.<sup>84</sup>

This is not to suggest that Friel's versions of *A Month in the Country* (commissioned by the Gate, Dublin) or *Fathers and Sons* (commissioned by the National Theatre, London), using Turgenev's works to critique Irish Big House society and its institutions, are Marxist. Rather, Friel's versions of Turgenev, like his version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, are highly reductive variants of the originals with their own intelligence and argumentative poise, their own communicative efficiency, making it artificial to evaluate them as either ideological or 'orthodox', 'authentic' translations. As indicated in the Preface, more productive, and the thrust of this thesis, is to examine Friel's critique of the influence of English discourse in Ireland, its role in cultural formation and to observe how he challenges this. The thesis considers both the Irish habit of *shoneenism*, born out of self-doubt, of deferring to things English simply because they are English and also the imperial conceit (espoused, among others, by Edmund Spenser<sup>85</sup>) of moving the Irish from savagery to civility. Spenser wanted

to convert the Irish to civility but averred that it might be necessary to exterminate many of them in order to achieve this and he marvelled at the capacity of Ireland to provoke a gentle man to a violence which ‘almost changed his very natural disposition.’<sup>86</sup> Seamus Deane comments that ‘Of all the blighting distinctions which govern our responses and limit our imagination at the moment, none is more potent than this four hundred year-old distinction between barbarians and civilians’ (1985 42). A recognition of these stereotypical dispositions informs Friel’s enterprise of decolonisation and aesthetic independence and, consequently, forms part of his challenge to ‘standard’ translations. However research reveals that critical and institutional response to and exploration of Friel’s translations leave them under-read or virtually ignored. The thesis examines this gap, contesting critical evaluation of Friel’s translations and offering evidence of under-reading and over-determination. It also maintains that the translations are not pedagogically examined as part of a body of work despite the fact that they highlight a gap in Irish aesthetic independence.

With his translations, Friel insists that there is no need for Irish audiences to listen in the tones and terms of others, in terms of what Ireland lacks vis-à-vis England. He points out that in the past, Irish audiences and actors received Chekhov and Turgenev through translations which, expressed in ‘standard’ English or American English, reflect more about English and American societies than those of the Russian authors. In performance, Irish actors had to pretend to be upper middle class English folk pretending to be Russian gentry. This series of deferments continued the historical imperial construction of the Irish as an antithesis of things English.<sup>87</sup> Rejecting the ‘cracked looking glass of a servant’, Friel argues that Turgenev and Chekhov, cast in Bloomsbury and Edwardian moulds, became not only secondary and belated but also laments for privileged English folk fallen on hard times. In his study *Chekhov on the British Stage: Reactions to a Theatrical Tradition*, Stuart Young charts this tradition, established in the 1920s and 1930s by Theodore Komisarjevsky, Michel Saint-Denis and John Gielgud, and the subsequent reaction to it spearheaded by dramatists such as Edward Bond and Trevor Griffiths as well as the fundamental reappraisal of the conventions of performance by Mike Alfred’s productions (1981-86).<sup>88</sup> Young concludes that on the British stage Chekhov is romanticised. Through varying degrees of localisation, Friel’s translations challenge such romanticisation, question the relevance of Bloomsbury translations for Irish or contemporary audiences and reject the underlying (British stage) ordering of the unresolved complexity central to the works of Turgenev and Chekhov. Their works observe the complexity of recurring disjunction and incoherence that happens when language fails to accommodate experience, and it is this complexity of language and the

potential for non-communication and misunderstanding that Friel wishes to re-create in Irish rhythms and cadences. For Friel, this disjunction parallels the common linguistic misapprehension that people in Ireland speak the same language as those in England and this is one reason why he is critical of existing English translations (such as Garnett's and Frayn's).

Friel's translations, like those of Edward Bond and Trevor Griffiths before him, challenge a dominant English mode of translation, performance and production. Bond has indicated that, in his opinion, established translations do not allow Chekhov's enquiry where 'the story and the analysis are close to each other ... because his society tried to understand itself in ways which our society doesn't. We think of psychological cures and economic recoveries, whereas Chekhov's society is more questioning.'<sup>89</sup> In the Preface to his version of *The Cherry Orchard* (1977), Trevor Griffiths comments that

For half a century now, in England as elsewhere, Chekhov has been the almost exclusive property of theatrical class secretaries for whom the plays have been plangent and sorrowing evocations of an 'ordered' past no longer with 'us', its passing greatly to be mourned. For theatregoers ... Chekhov's tough, bright eyed complexity was dulced into swallowable sacs of sentimental morality.

Griffiths aptly observes that the dominant mode is 'so oppressive as to distance ... a whole generation of theatre writers and workers for whom Chekhov had come to seem, in his content as much as his form, inalienably bound up with the fine regrettable weeping of the privileged fallen on hard times' and further comments:

Translation followed translation, that idiom became 'our' idiom, that class 'our' class, until the play's specific historicity and precise sociological imagination had been bleached of all meanings beyond those required to convey the necessary 'natural' sense that the fine will always be undermined by the crude and that the 'human condition' can for all essential purposes be equated with 'the plight of the middle classes'.<sup>90</sup>

Clearly Bond and Griffiths challenge Bloomsbury-style translations and (working from transliterations) re-appropriate and alter Chekhov's enquiry into the possibilities of change in pursuit of their own examinations of conflict and confusion in their society. Their translations are rewritings and, as Susan Bassnett-McGuire indicates, manipulate the old in order to introduce it *anew*, refuting the notion of a fixed or definitive interpretation.<sup>91</sup> For similar reasons, outlined in the Preface to his version of *A Month in the Country* and elsewhere, Friel

indicates his desire to break with prescriptive interpretations, the notion of a 'standard' translation and says that he trusts what he describes as 'tinkering' will not offend the purists. His phrasing is both provocative and instructive, for while Friel claims an empathetic connection with both Turgenev and Chekhov, his re-creation of their works indicates his intention to adapt the richness and vitality of their enquiry to his own use in a contemporary Irish context, 'as stepping stones to get to the other side.'<sup>92</sup> This is achieved through re-appropriation and contestation. Friel focuses our attention on the gap between words and meaning, on recognising that words and their semantic fields *vary* according to language and situation and that, whether within or between languages, translation is the daily task of signification, implicit in every speech act.

Like Friel, Turgenev and Chekhov recognise that one's society has its own particular beliefs and codes differing from other socio-political arrangements. All three writers understand that the journey of life, potentially towards self-awareness, is neither necessarily direct nor ever complete, but that a balance of 'heart and head' *may* provide a saving grace, a quality of being that has nothing to do with the beliefs or socio-political arrangements of church or state. All three present their audiences with symptoms rather than cures, with the *gaps* between encoded values and conflicting behaviour. Clearly, something *more* than shared insight or love of the Russian works motivated Friel.

Friel believes that drama can examine critically the architecture through which we structure existence and can help shape the perceptions of a culture through the power of its imaging. It can actively contribute to producing enquiry into representation and the conditions of its reception. From the 1980s onwards, an explosion of new national interrogative writing (published by Field Day and others), together with the persistence of violence in Ireland, has raised questions so fundamental that they have forced the Irish to reconsider some of their most sacrosanct notions. In this gathering critical climate, Paul Muldoon is able to quip that Yeats should have saved his pencil lead. Similarly, Seamus Heaney, in 'The Feast of the Holy Tundish' feels free to dismiss Stephen Dedalus's dysphoria, warning: 'That subject people stuff is a cod's game, / infantile, like your peasant pilgrimage' and that 'the English language belongs to us.'<sup>93</sup>

## ix confronting the classics and ourselves

In *An Anatomy of Drama*, Martin Esslin maintains that theatre is 'the place where a nation thinks in front of itself.'<sup>94</sup> Friel's theatre and particularly the five plays discussed in this thesis propose creative and critical cultural renovation and renewal, engaging audiences

in a re-reading of the energies effecting change within the country. But for Friel, theatre is more than a mirror of social conditions. It is a place of critical engagement and imagination where palpable transactions occur among directors, designers, actors and audiences, 'looking into the dark corners of the human heart' while also remaining mindful that drama is captured with and by its own linguistic ambivalences. His drama is concerned with communication and its symbolic representation whereby language is *seen* to be one of the major forces shaping our lives.

Friel's translations of *Three Sisters* (for Field Day), *Fathers and Sons* (for the National Theatre, London) and *A Month in the Country* (for the Gate Theatre, Dublin) demonstrate several things. First, he chose to rescore these works in Hiberno English largely for Irish voices and reception, and to *make obvious* his re-appropriation of Chekhov's and Turgenev's investigations of the recurring disjunction and incoherence that result when language fails to accommodate experience. Although the degree of idiomatic pointing varies across the three translations, rescored in the rhythms and cadences of Irish experience, he provides versions which speak more directly to contemporary audiences and their circumstances than other translations. With *Three Sisters* in particular, rescored accents relate to Irish idiomatic utterance and understanding so that even articulation becomes a point of social attention. Friel *also* contests dominant English and Irish nationalist cultural elitisms and Irish tolerance of such notions. By disrupting and displacing 'standard' English translations, Friel's versions assert an independence, demonstrating this through local and hybridised idiom and detail. Through a schema of irony and echoic and 'fork' words (where more than one meaning is possible) he confronts both the classics and us and our ability to translate. Such devices highlight subjective interpretation, the multivalence of language and reference, and the indeterminacy of translation and, as a consequence, require audiences not only to interpret what they have heard and seen, but also to analyse what has prompted their particular response. In this way Friel asks his audiences not only 'what do you value?', but 'how?' and 'why?' These several transactions form an inextricable part of Friel's oeuvre, characterised by questions. The occlusion of answers and certainty in his work positively underlines the unfinalised qualities or gaps inherent in day to day communication and existence. But instead of dwelling upon or denying uncertainties, Friel embraces them as possibilities of change. This thesis examines Friel's translations, together with *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, in terms of such possibilities, in terms of performance and of their communicative efficiency and value for Irish audiences, and argues that, through a poetics of fracture, these works contribute to a process of aesthetic independence based on an

acceptance of differences. In this sense Friel's Russian plays perform both hermeneutic and cultural-historical functions. In Hiberno English they re-write the enquiries of Turgenev and Chekhov, aligning them with contemporary experience, including Irish-English relations. They open up established translation categories (as identified by George Steiner, Susan Bassnett-McGuire, André Lefevere and Michael Cronin among others), imperial *and* nationalist ideological assumptions, and conventions that have dominated Irish drama from Farquhar to Behan. Friel is not a polyglot and these are not 'orthodox' translations nor are they a prelude to or guarantee of eventual Irish autonomy. They are, as Heaney suggests, 'a form of growth' and, as such, Friel's appropriative use of the Russian authors increases his creative legacy and justifies examination. Hence *Dancing at Lughnasa* can be described, with justification, as a product of his Russian encounter — a 'Chekhovian' poetics of fracture — that is essentially Irish.

#### x chapter outlines

Chapter One traces specific moments of historical translation theory and practice and existing debates in relation to the tradition of translation in Ireland. It acknowledges the universal appropriative and imperialist movements in every act of translation and, focussing upon Ireland, it sketches the power wielded by writers of strategic formations, and by translators in their formation of translation categories. It observes that in contemporary translation debate, the domain and role of the translation and the translator have, especially over the past decade, been considerably opened up. One consequence of this is that in Ireland, historical strictures which could be termed as 'the writing of Ireland', are being re-read in a manner similar to critical investigations regarding the notions of essence, of authorship and of definitive interpretations. In doing so, Chapter One assumes the grounds laid out by Bassnett-McGuire, Lefevere and Cronin, asserting that Friel's translations are rewritings, literary manipulations, and as such can be examined in terms of their intention, ideologies, poetics and performance. Friel's Russian plays are working examples of the translation views held by Bassnett-McGuire, Lefevere and Cronin that rewritings are antagonistic to the orthodox prescriptions of translations, that they are a form of growth and can influence the evolution of a literature and a society by introducing new concepts and new space and bringing disparate voices into dialogue. Individually these writers recognise the necessity to strategically alter any piece of work in order to bring it into line with the living experience and conditions of its new reception while remaining alert to the distortions of emphasis that are part and parcel of the act of translation.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, rewritings such as Friel's are plays pre-empting all the interactive processes the medium involves.

Chapter Two considers Friel's *Translations*. The play dramatises aspects of Steiner's philosophy and theory of language and translation but departs from his vision of translation in that in performance, it interrogates (rather than merely reproduces) classical authority and critical response. Thus in the world of *Translations* we are confronted with a culture that is breaking up and, by inference, our abilities to translate and transform are challenged.

Chapters Three, Four and Five examine Friel's use of the enquiries of Turgenev and Chekhov. Each chapter examines the different circumstances in which each of the translations was produced and offers some consideration of the implications of such circumstances. Each chapter notes specific alterations effected by Friel and combines textual analysis and critical response to his three Russian plays. (Textual analysis and critical reception co-exist in Chapters Two, Three, Four, Five and Seven with the focus on performability, communicative efficiency and critical response.)

Chapter Six discusses the value of competing translations and contextualises Friel's translations in a continuum that includes and, in specific aspects differs from, works by Yeats, O'Casey and Heaney. The chapter reiterates the claim of Chapter Three, identifying a gap in Irish aesthetic response to Friel's Russian plays, and examines aspects of this critical and pedagogical response.

Chapter Seven analyses *Dancing at Lughnasa* (frequently hailed as 'Chekhovian') as one manifestation of Friel's Russian encounter and confirmation of the value of competing translations. Structurally, *Dancing at Lughnasa* is examined in terms of a componential metaphor, synthesising aspects from the traditional *amharclann* (centre for looking), open to *taibhdhearc*<sup>96</sup> (manifestations of the imagination) and narrated by a *seanachie*<sup>97</sup> through a language of memory, music, movement and gesture redolent of the poetics of Chekhov but finding its fullest expression through a wholly Irish 'music.'

Chapter Eight, 'Language and the Possibilities of Change', pulls together the performance-response lines of enquiry and the challenges which run throughout the thesis on the processes of cultural formation, of representation and of critical and pedagogical response. This chapter and the thesis conclusion end on a note of contestation, challenging prevailing Irish notions of value and meaning, integral aspects of representation and translation. The thesis challenges the response Irish criticism and pedagogy have offered the five plays discussed and challenges the appropriateness of using the term post-colonialism to describe either the work of Friel or the situation in contemporary Ireland. Underlying these several challenges is the writer's assertion that the situation in Ireland like the aesthetic decolonisation advanced by Friel, is unresolved.

Friel is neither a Messianic-mythmaker nor a literary Luddite. He maintains that a translation, adaptation or rewriting cannot render, nor can commentary circumscribe, the network of thoughts and feelings of Turgenev and Chekhov. For his purposes, Friel translates their enquiries from a past time and culture into a climate of chance, performance and communication in contemporary Ireland. Rather than 'mirroring' or contesting the affective power of the English language, Friel argues for its transformation. Hiberno English, the hybrid off-spring of colonisation, potentially provides such a vocabulary. But what position does such a vocabulary, as a signifier of social, political and cultural presence, hold in Ireland? By virtue of its multivalency, peppered with paradigms and cultural interpenetrations, it is, Friel argues, a language of many tongues, but one that can equip his divided communities to talk to each other.

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<sup>1</sup>. Daniel Corkery. *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature*. Cork: Cork UP, 1931. 14. See also Colbert Kearney. "Daniel Corkery: A Priest to His People." *Rural Ireland, Real Ireland?* Ed. Jacqueline Genet. Irish Literary Studies 49. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe 1996. 201-212. Subsequent references to the latter text cited as *Rural Ireland, Real Ireland?* 1996.

<sup>2</sup>. W.B. Yeats, *Plays and Controversies*. London: Macmillan, 1923. 197-198. See also Jacqueline Genet. "Yeats and the Myth of Rural Ireland." *Rural Ireland, Real Ireland?* 1996. 139-157.

<sup>3</sup>. See Douglas Hyde. "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland." *Language, Lore and Lyrics: Essays and Lectures*. ed. Breandán Ó Conaire. Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1986: 153, 169, 123, 129. and Stopford A. Brooke. *The Need and Use of Getting Irish Literature into the English Tongue*. London. Chilworth: Unwin Brothers, Printers, 1893. 60-65. See also Declan Kiberd. "Decolonizing the Mind: Douglas Hyde and Irish Ireland." *Rural Ireland, Real Ireland?* 1996. 121-137.

<sup>4</sup>. David Cairns and Shaun Richards point out that this concept was 'developed by Lenin, in his *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, to convey the notion that relations of domination and subservience may exist between regions within a state analogous to those between a colony and the metropolitan state.' See David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland, Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988. 169. Subsequent references cited as *Writing Ireland* 1988.

<sup>5</sup>. Imperialism is the exploration, charting and subjugation under colonial control of other lands. See Cairns's and Richards's *Writing Ireland* 1988. See also Luke Gibbons. *Transformation in Irish Culture, Critical Conditions*. Cork: Cork UP/Field Day, 1996 and David Lloyd. *Anomalous States, Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1993.

<sup>6</sup>. For comparative examples of post-colonial cultures having to pass through metropolitan languages, see Roberto Schwarz. "Brazilian Culture: Nationalism by Elimination." *New Left Review* 167. January-February (1988): 77; Roberto Fernandez Retamar "Caliban." *Caliban and Other Essays*. Trans. Edward Baker. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1988. 3. and Octavio Paz. "The Pachuco and Other Extremes." *Labyrinths of Solitude*. New York: Grove Press, 1961. 13-27 (16).

<sup>7</sup>. Nationalism (not to be confused with ethnicism) is the doctrine that the nation should be collectively and freely institutionally expressed and ruled by its co-nationals. The first civic nationalist movement was organised by the United Irishmen in the 1790s. Modelling themselves on the French Jacobins, they aimed to establish a republic in which all the residents of the island, 'Catholics, Protestant and Dissenter', would enjoy equal citizenship. Thus, their conception of the nation was both civic and territorial. However, subsequently in Ireland nationalism has often been interpreted along oppositional and exclusive and essentialist lines. See John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland*. Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1995 and Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: the Quest for Understanding*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. 178 passim.



- <sup>8</sup>. However, as Declan Kiberd points out, it is indicative of Ireland's strange position as a white European colony that the authors of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, do not examine the situation in any depth (see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989, 33), and yet this text is hailed as 'the most important theoretical treatment to date' by Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins in their study, *Post-Colonial Drama, theory, practice, politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, 5.
- <sup>9</sup>. Throughout this thesis 'tradition', in either the singular or plural sense, is understood as an embodied condition, the product of a community's understanding of itself in short, informed self-referentiality. 'National consciousness' is understood as the state's sense of self, ideally an open-ended and evolving process but intertwined with political processes and, therefore, subject to the established ideology, its epistemic institutions and controls.
- <sup>10</sup>. On differences (used as a source of division, rather than a source of variety and richness) see Homi K. Bhabha. "Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism." *The Politics of Theory*. Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1983. 199, 203-204.
- <sup>11</sup>. Friel's use of the term 'constituent' reinforces his belief that the arts can and do influence life. See also Seamus Heaney. *The Government of the Tongue: The T.S. Eliot Memorial Lectures and Other Critical Writings*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988. xxi..
- <sup>12</sup>. According to Corkery, this predicament was due to the continuing deference by the Irish to things English. See Daniel Corkery. *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature*. 1931.14-15. See also *A Significant Irish Educationalist: Educational Writings of Patrick Pearse*. ed. Séamus Ó Buachalla. Cork: Cork UP, 1980, esp. pp 353-355, 372, 374 and 377. See also Declan Kiberd. "Post-Colonial Ireland - 'A Quaking Sod.'" *Inventing Ireland*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995, 551-561.
- <sup>13</sup>. See Terence Brown. *Ireland, A Social and Cultural History, 1922-85*. London: Faber and Faber, repr. 1990, 9-11. and Edward W. Said. *The World, The Text, The Critic*. Cambridge Mass: Harvard UP, 1983, 26-53.
- <sup>14</sup>. The habit of taking the coloniser as model. See L.P. Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971.
- <sup>15</sup>. Samuel Beckett. "Dante ... Bruno ... Vico .. Joyce." *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment*. ed. Ruby Cohn. London: John Calder, 1983. 19-33 (19).
- <sup>16</sup>. Brian Friel. "Self-Portrait." *Aquarius* 5 (1972): 17-22.
- <sup>17</sup>. Homi Bhabha. "The Commitment to Theory." *New Formations* 5 (1988): 5-24.
- <sup>18</sup>. W.B. Yeats. *Essays and Introductions*. London: Macmillan, 1961. 515.
- <sup>19</sup>. Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya; London: James Currey, 1986.
- <sup>20</sup>. *The Cherry Orchard*. A Comedy in Four Acts. Trans. Michael Frayn. London: Eyre Methuen, 1978. Xx.
- <sup>21</sup>. Throughout this thesis 'paradigm' is understood as a tradition transmitted through historical exemplars. Thus paradigm is defined sociologically and historically in relation to the structure of knowledge. Thomas Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1970.
- <sup>22</sup>. Interview. Friel-Cairan Carty, *Sunday Independent* 5 Oct. 1980: 16.
- <sup>23</sup>. Thomas Kinsella. "The Divided Mind." *Irish Poets in English*. Ed. Sean Lucy. Cork: Mercier Press, 1973. 217.
- <sup>24</sup>. Revivalists such as Douglas Hyde, A.E., Lady Gregory and Yeats, exponents of the Celtic Twilight, founded a National Theatre where theoretically the ideals of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and the Gaelic peasantry could find common ground in a shared reliving of the ancient Celtic past, replacing the English education with an intellectually nationalised system, 'Gaelic and free.' See Douglas Hyde (1894) "The Necessity For De-Anglicising Ireland." *Language, Lore and Lyrics: Essays and Lectures*. Ed. Breandán Ó Conaire. Dublin, Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1986: 153-170. On Pearse, see Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure*, London, Faber and Faber, 1979 and Joan Towey Mitchell. "Yeats, Pearse and Cuchulain." *Eire-Ireland* XI Winter (1976): 51-65.

- <sup>25</sup>. Peter Costello. *The Heart Grown Brutal: The Irish Revolution in Literature, from Parnell to the Death of Yeats, 1891-1939*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977. xi.
- <sup>26</sup>. Richard Kearney. "The Transitional Crisis of Modern Irish Culture." *Irishness in a Changing Society*. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1988. 78-94.
- <sup>27</sup>. Interview. Friel-Graham Morison. *Acorn* Magee College, Derry, Spring (1965): 4-15.
- <sup>28</sup>. Seamus Heaney. *Sweeney Astray*. London: Faber and Faber, 1983 and *The Cure at Troy, A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes*. London: Faber and Faber in association with Field Day, 1990.
- <sup>29</sup>. See Desmond Fennell, *Whatever You Say, Say Nothing. Why Seamus Heaney is No. 1*. Dublin: Elo Press, 1991 esp. pp 12-18.
- <sup>30</sup>. Throughout this thesis references to works will be abbreviated (as indicated in Abbreviations), followed by page numbers and enclosed in brackets, e.g. (T 418) refers to *Translations*, page 418.
- <sup>31</sup>. See Luke Gibbons. *Transformation in Irish Culture. Critical Conditions* Field Day. Cork: Cork UP/Field Day, 1996.
- <sup>32</sup>. For a comprehensive survey of the affects of imperialism and nationalism in Irish culture and history, see David Lloyd's *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987 and *Anomalous States*. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1993.
- <sup>33</sup>. See Vincent Buckley. "Poetry and the Avoidance of Nationalism." *Irish Culture and Nationalism 1750-1950*. Eds. Oliver MacDonagh, W.F. Mandle and Pauric Travers. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983. 258-279 (261).
- <sup>34</sup>. Brian Friel. "The Man from God Knows Where: An Interview with Brian Friel." Fintan O'Toole, *In Dublin*. October (1982): 20-23 (21). See also Lionel Pilkington. "Language and politics in Brian Friel's *Translations*." *Irish Univ. Review* 20. 2. Autumn (1990): 282-98.
- <sup>35</sup>. See pages 6 and 12 of Introduction plus endnote 46, page 28 for a definition of sectarianism and how it infringes the rights of individuals or groups and/or influences or causes destructive conflict.
- <sup>36</sup>. The early nationalist theatre of Augusta Gregory, Yeats and McBride ignored the imperial residue and produced plays marked by the ideological trope of representing Ireland as an idealised, pious woman for whom total sacrifice was legitimate while ignoring the real position of women. See David Cairns and Shaun Richards "Tropes and Traps: Aspects of 'Woman' and Nationality in Twentieth-Century Irish Drama." *Gender in Irish Writing*. Ed. Toni O'Brien Johnson and David Cairns. Buckingham: Open UP, 1991. 128-37.
- <sup>37</sup>. See 'the contemporary setting', section ii of this chapter.
- <sup>38</sup>. See Seamus Deane. "Yeats, Ireland and Revolution" in *The Crane Bag* 1. 2. (1977): 139-143.
- <sup>39</sup>. Matthew Arnold. "On the Study of Celtic Literature." *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*. Ed. R.H. Super. *Complete Prose Works*, Vol III. Michigan: Ann Arbor, Michigan UP (1965). 291-386 and "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1867). *Essays in Criticism*. London: Macmillan & Co. 1888. 1-41.
- <sup>40</sup>. Quoted in Robert Kee. *Ireland, A History*. London: Abacus, A Division of Little, Brown & Co. (UK) 1995. 223.
- <sup>41</sup>. The Irish Free State is the name of the independent Irish state established in 1922 which acquired full sovereignty in 1937, and was declared a Republic in 1949. The 'Irish Free State' is a term used to refer to independent Ireland between 1922 and 1937. Northern Ireland is the name of the formal political unit created by the Government of Ireland Act, 1930.
- <sup>42</sup>. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary suggest that the conflict in Northern Ireland is ethno-national, that is, a systematic quarrel between the political organisations of the two communities who want their state to be ruled by their nation, or who want what they perceive as "their" state to protect their nation. McGarry and O'Leary. *Explaining Northern Ireland*. 1995. 311-383. See also Donald Horowitz. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. 57-74. and Anthony Smith. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986 and *National Identity*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991. 147 ff.

- <sup>43</sup>. Sectarianism is a complex of attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and structures in which religion is a significant component, and which directly, or indirectly, infringes the rights of individuals or groups and/or influences or causes situations of destructive conflict.
- <sup>44</sup>. McGarry and O'Leary. 1995. 64-159. See also Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: the Quest for Understanding*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. 178 passim.
- <sup>45</sup>. Interview. Friel-C. Fusco. Greencastle, Donegal 18 Jul. 1996.
- <sup>46</sup>. Friel. "Self-Portrait." *Aquarius* (1972): 17-22.
- <sup>47</sup>. *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1964) *Selected Plays of Brian Friel*. London: Faber and Faber, 1984.
- <sup>88</sup>. See Robert Welch. "Isn't this your job to translate?" *Changing States: Transformations in Modern Irish Writing*. London: Routledge, 1993. 224-240.
- <sup>48</sup>. Seamus Deane. "General Introduction." *The Field Day Anthology*. 1991. xxv.
- <sup>49</sup>. Seamus Deane. "Introduction." *Selected Plays of Brian Friel*. London: Faber and Faber, 1984. 13.
- <sup>50</sup>. See Richard Kearney. "Language Play: Brian Friel and Ireland's Verbal Theatre." *Studies* 72. Spring (1983): 20-56 and "The Language Plays of Brian Friel" and Appendices I-IV. *Transitions, Narratives in Modern Irish Culture*. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1988. 123-160. See Kiberd. *Inventing Ireland* 1995. "Translating Tradition" 624-637 and "Friel Translating" 614-23.
- <sup>51</sup>. "Finding voice in a language not our own." Brian Friel talks with Ciarn Carty *Sunday Independent* 5 Oct. 1980: 16.
- <sup>52</sup>. See Klaus Birker. "The Relationship between the Stage and the Audience in Brian Friel's *The Freedom of the City*." *The Irish Playwright and the City*. Ed. M. Harmon. Irish Literary Studies 18. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1984. 153-8.
- <sup>53</sup>. See Csilla Bertha, "Tragedies of National Fate: A Comparison between Brian Friel's *Translations* and its Hungarian Counterpart, András Sütő's *A Szuzai menyegao*." *Irish University Review* 17.2. Autumn (1987): 207-22.
- <sup>54</sup>. See Elmer Andrews. *The Art of Brian Friel, Neither Reality Nor Dreams*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995. 202-207 and 219-234.
- <sup>55</sup>. See Seamus Deane. "Irish Poetry and Irish Nationalism." *Two Decades of Irish Writing: A Critical Survey*. Ed. Douglas Dunn. Chester Springs, Pa.: Carcanet Press 1975. 4-22 (8).
- <sup>56</sup>. See Fintan O'Toole. "Brian Friel: The Healing Art." *Magill* (Jan. 1985): 31-35 (34-35).
- <sup>57</sup>. In this regard, see Terence Brown. "Translating Ireland." *Krino* 7. (1987): 137-140.
- <sup>58</sup>. Interview. Friel-Carty *Sunday Independent* 5 Oct. 1980: 16.
- <sup>59</sup>. Interview. Friel-Paddy Agnew *Magill* Dec. 1990: 59-61.
- <sup>60</sup>. "Field Day Theatre Co. To Present Chekov's *Three Sisters*" (anon.) *Derry Journal*, 19 June 1981.
- <sup>61</sup>. Eamonn Hughes. "To Define Your Dissent: The Plays & Polemics of the Field Day Theatre Co." *Theatre Research International*. 15.1 (1990): 72-9.
- <sup>62</sup>. See John Gray. "Field Day Five Years On." *Linen Hall Review* 2..2. Summer (1985): 4-10. See also Interview. Friel-O'Toole. "The Man From God Knows Where." *In Dublin* 165. Oct. (1982): 20-3 (where Friel talks of the possibility of a political state coming out of a cultural re-reading) and O'Toole's profile of Friel, "Keeper of the faith." *Review Guardian* 16 Jan. 1992. 26.
- <sup>63</sup>. See Seamus Deane. "Heroic Styles: The Tradition of an Idea." *Ireland's Field Day*. London: Hutchinson 1985. 45-58.
- <sup>64</sup>. Marilyn Richtarik. *Acting Between the Lines, The Field Day Theatre Company and Irish Cultural Politics 1980-1984* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- <sup>65</sup>. See Steiner 1992 217.
- <sup>66</sup>. Interview. Friel-Agnew. "Talking to ourselves." *Magill* 1 Dec. (1980): 61. Cf. Steiner's assertions regarding communication. Steiner 1992 45; 231; see also 29-30.
- <sup>67</sup>. Michael Etherton. "The Field Day Theatre Company and the New Irish Drama." *New Theatre Quarterly* 4. (1986): 64-70.

<sup>68</sup>. Friel. "Self Portrait." *Aquarius* 3 (1972): 17-22.

<sup>69</sup>. Frank McGuinness letter to author 24 May 1993.

<sup>70</sup>. See Elgy Gillespie. "The Saturday Interview, Elgy Gillespie talked to Brian Friel." *Irish Times* 5 Sep. 1981, 16. See also O'Toole, "The Man From God Knows Where." In *Dublin* 165. 28 Oct. (1982): 20-3, and O'Toole, "Keeper of the faith." *Review Guardian* 16 Jan. 1992: 26.

<sup>71</sup>. See Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M M Bakhtin*. ed. M. Holquist trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist. Austin: Texas UP, 1981. 288-291.

<sup>72</sup>. Chekhov commented: 'Let the coming generations attain happiness; but they surely ought to ask themselves, for what did their ancestors live and for what did they suffer.' See *The Note-Books of Anton Tchekhov Together with Reminiscences of Tchekhov by Maxim Gorky*. Trans. S.S. Koteliensky and Leonard Woolf. Richmond: Hogarth, 1921. 13.

<sup>73</sup>. See D.E.S. Maxwell. *Brian Friel*. Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 1973. Richard Pine. *Brian Friel and Ireland's Drama*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990. and Elmer Andrews. *The Art of Brian Friel, Neither Reality Nor Dreams*. New York: Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, 1995. See also Ulf Dantanus. *Brian Friel: The Growth of an Irish Dramatist*. Gothenburg Studies in English 59. Atlantis Heights, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1986, George O'Brien. *Brian Friel*, Twayne's English Authors Series. Georgetown: Georgetown Univ; Boston, Mass: Gill and Macmillan, 1989, Robert Welch, *Changing States, Transformation in Modern Irish Writing*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993 and Elmer Andrews. *The Art of Brian Friel, Neither Reality Nor Dreams*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

<sup>74</sup>. Field Day Theatre Company translations:

- 1981 - Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (1901) adapted by Brian Friel
- 1983 - Seamus Heaney's *Sweeney Astray* (translation of *Buile Suibhne*)
- 1984 - *The Riot Act* by Tom Paulin after Sophocles' *Antigone*
- 1984 - *High Time* by Derek Mahon after Moliere's *L'Ecole des Maris*
- 1990 - *The Cure at Troy* (after Sophocles' *Philoctetes*) by Seamus Heaney
- 1995 - Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* adapted by Frank McGuinness.

<sup>75</sup>. Michael Cronin. "Emergence of a New Ireland." *Translating Ireland, Translation, Languages and Cultures*. Cork: Cork UP, 1996. 131 passim.

<sup>76</sup>. Seamus Deane maintains that in any recension of inherited paradigms 'it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of translations in the development of the Irish literary tradition in English, from Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789), through James Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy* (1831), and Samuel Ferguson's review of it, and including Mangan and John O'Daly's *Poets and Poetry of Munster* (1848), Hyde's translations of Raftery and Lady Gregory's versions of the Cuchulainn story.' Deane states that 'the question at the heart of many or all of these attempts was the cultural one of the conciliation of what was wild, savage, passionate (the Irish) into what was civil and polished (the English language)' and adds that this was 'the cultural form of a political issue.' Deane letters to author 2 Oct. 1995 and 10 Jan. 1996 respectively.

<sup>77</sup>. See Jyotsna Singh, "Different Shakespeares: The Bard in Colonial/Postcolonial India." *Theatre Journal* 41. 4. Dec. (1989): 445-58.

<sup>78</sup>. Friel has indicated that he consulted translations of *Three Sisters* by Ronald Hingley, Constance Garnett, S.S. Koteliensky, E. Fen, A. Dunnigan; *A Month in the Country* by A. Nikolaeff, E. Williams, Isaiah Berlin, and *Fathers and Sons* by Ralph E. Matlaw. Friel letter to author 31 Jan. 1996.

<sup>79</sup>. See Douglas Hyde. "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland." 1986. 153-170. Wm. Bedell Stanford. *Ireland and the Classical Tradition*. 1976. 11-73. and Sheila Falconer. "An Irish Translation of the Gregory Legend." 1958. 52-95.

<sup>80</sup>. The struggle for self-definition is conducted within language and whereas the term Irish English might have signalled a spiritually and physically hyphenated Elizabethan subject, 'a *dhream Ghaoidhealta ghallda*' (o people Irish-English), '*lena leath-bhroig Chaelach agus a leath-broig Ghallda*' (with one shoe Gaelic, and the other shoe English), the term is used here to positively assert the linguistic hybridity that resulted from the prolonged assimilation of Irish culture by the English language.

<sup>81</sup>. See Gerhard Ebeling. *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language*. Trans. from German by K.A. Wilson. London: Wilson, 1973. 154 ff.

<sup>82</sup>. Declan Kiberd. "Writers in Quarantine? The Case for Irish Studies." *The Crane Bag* 3.1. (1979): 9-21, and "Decolonizing the mind: Douglas Hyde and Irish Ireland". *Rural Ireland, Real Ireland?* 1996. 121-137.

<sup>83</sup>. See William Bedell Stanford. *Ireland and the Classical Tradition*. 1976. 73.

<sup>84</sup>. Successive conciliatory positions taken towards natives by the Crown, were converted, at settler insistence, into policies designed to keep native Irish subjugated and underlie the current Irish crisis. See Ian Lustick. *State-Building Failure in British Ireland and French Algeria*. Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1985. 5. and *Unsettled States, Disputed Lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria and the West-Bank-Gaza*. New York: Cornell UP, 1993. See also Brendan O'Leary and John McGarry. *The Politics of Antagonism: Understanding Northern Ireland*. London: Athlone, 1993, and Ronald Weitzer, *Transforming Settler States: Communal Conflict and Internal Security in Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1990.

<sup>85</sup>. Edmund Spenser in "A Brief Note on Ireland" (1598) followed up the Lord President's suggestion and advised the Queen that 'the Irish should be constrained first to taste some great calamity, so as to render them more assured and dutiful thereafter.' Cited in Theodore W. Allen. *The Invention of the White Race*. Vol. 1. London: Verso, 1994. 63-210. See Spenser. *View* (1596) in *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vol. 1. Derry, N. Ireland: Field Day Publications, distributed by Faber and Faber, London, 1991. 183 ff. See also Pauline Henley. *Spenser in Ireland*. Cork: Cork UP, 1929. 164-68. Burke described the widespread suffering of post-Cromwellian Ireland, as a hell in the grip of 'demoniacs possessed with a spirit of fallen pride and inverted ambition.' Burke, *Works*. Vol. 5. 148-7. *Works*. Vol. 10. 217; Vol. 2. 222. Edmund Burke. *Works*. London: Henry Frowde, Oxford UP, 1925-1930.

<sup>86</sup>. Edmund Spenser *View* Field Day 191.

<sup>87</sup>. This sustained abnegation was propagated and justified by means of superior force and cohesive organisation, and narrated by writers and educationalists such as Spenser, Stanyhurst, Ferguson and Arnold, all of whom represented the English as controlled, refined and rooted and the Irish as irrational, ignorant and itinerant. These writers offer stereotypical views of the Irish as either ferocious fighters or feckless but biddable servants and these stereotypes found frequent expression upon the English national stage. They have survived into the modern period and are interrogated in such identifiable forms as O'Casey's Captain Boyle and Joxer Daly, and Samuel Beckett's Didi and Gogo. But their earliest and perhaps most succinct 'brother' was Shakespeare's Macmorris in *Henry the Fifth*.

<sup>88</sup>. Stuart Young. *Chekhov on the British Stage: Reactions to a Theatrical Tradition*. Unpublished Thesis, Cambridge, 1988. See also *Chekhov on the British Stage*. Ed. and trans. Patrick Miles. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.

<sup>89</sup>. Edward Bond letter to author 22 July 1995. Bond's own translation, like Friel's, questions 'distant' authority and emphasises the danger of characters' self-delusion endlessly constructing fictions while searching for (illusory) external solutions. See also David Benedictus's review, 'Saved Again.' *Plays and Players* June (1967): 43.

<sup>90</sup>. Trevor Griffiths. "Introduction." *The Cherry Orchard: A New English Version*. London: Pluto Press, 1978.

<sup>91</sup>. Susan Bassnett-McGuire. *Translation Studies*. London: Routledge, 1980 and Bassnett-McGuire, "Ways through the Labyrinth: Strategies and Methods for Translating Theatre Texts" and André Lefevere, "Why Waste Our Time on Rewrites? The Trouble with Interpretation and the Role of Rewriting in an alternative Paradigm." Ed. Theo Hermans. *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*. London: Croom Helm, 1985. 85-102 and 215-433 (232-3) respectively. See also André Lefevere. *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. London: Routledge, 1992.

<sup>92</sup>. Letter to the Author 1 Dec. 1995.

<sup>93</sup>. Seamus Heaney. *Station Island*. London. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984. Section XII.93.

<sup>94</sup>. Martin Esslin. *An Anatomy of Drama*. London: Sphere Abacus, 1978. 101.

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<sup>95</sup>. See Bassnett-McGuire and Lefevere (London: Routledge, 1992) vii.

<sup>96</sup>. *Amarc* - look; *lann* - a centre for the activity in question, e.g. *leabhar* - a book; *Leabharlann* - a library, so *amharclann* - a theatre or playhouse. *Taibh* - a root of various words implying dream, imagination, ghosts, revelation, manifestation. *-dhearc* - from *dearc* (aspirated in its composite form) meaning look, behold, regard, consider, so *taibhdhearc* - a place where people behold or present things of the imagination.

<sup>97</sup>. The traditional Irish storyteller, related to the Druid praise poets.

**Chapter I Between Two Languages**

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Not to speak your mother tongue. To live in sounds, logics cut off from the nocturnal memory of the body, the bittersweet sleep of childhood. To carry within yourself a secret tomb, or like a handicapped child the language of another time — treasured and useless — that fades away but never leaves you. ... So between two languages, your true element is silence. (Julia Kristeva)<sup>1</sup>

Translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication, in the emission and reception of each and every mode of meaning, be it in the widest semiotic sense or in more specifically verbal exchanges. To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate. (George Steiner)<sup>2</sup>

### i 'translation is ...'

The above extracts indicate the line of enquiry I adopt regarding the process of translation as re-writing<sup>3</sup> and transformation<sup>4</sup> and the task of translator self-imposed by Brian Friel in relation to three Russian classics; his 1981 rewriting of Anton Chekhov's play, *Three Sisters* (1901), his 1987 dramatisation of Ivan Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862) and his 1992 rewriting of Turgenev's *A Month in the Country* (1850, pub. 1855). This thesis assumes the ground laid out by Susan Bassnett-McGuire:

translation is ... a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of a power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another.<sup>5</sup>

Friel's rewritings are dialectic manipulations; purposive and effective acts of self-location. Through them Friel aims to give a different existence rather than a new life to the enquiries of Turgenev and Chekhov, one that speaks directly to Irish lived experience. From his perspective, difference (among other things) concerns the irreducible cultural burden behind all language and behind and between 'standard' English and Hiberno English. Difference is dialogical; it is not an admission of failure or subordination but a celebration and affirmation of heterogeneous potential. Friel's dramatic impulse is to develop decolonised cultural evaluation; to remember and re-member gaps and silences. At the critical heart of his theatre is the insistence that even within a set language code, translation between the private and public signal is necessary. Accordingly, the contestatory nature of his translations not only displaces 'standard' English codes of meaning and evaluation but also interrogates Irish understanding and acceptance of them. English-Irish inter-dependence, habitually deaf to its imperial echo, has created a polarised political climate. What sustains such a climate? The simple answer is the absence of self-consciousness (a pre-requisite to being conscious of



others) and the presence of disabling and incarcerating myths. Scrutinising the making of this climate, Friel insists that an understanding of the gap between what we say and mean, between what we hear and understand, perpetuates our own fundamental alienation, as reflected in language and, through entrenched patterns, polarises our socio-political existence. Friel recognises that it is possible to develop new ways of traversing and re-defining the given. Like Bassnett-McGuire, he recognises that translation, opening up new understanding, concerns movement and a resistance to fixity. Friel also recognises that because translation (like evaluation) is rarely divorced from issues of power and identity, it can destabilise universalist theoretical prescriptions and initiate change.

Friel's translations encourage change and accommodation. His comments about 'eternal linguistic vigilance' echo Steiner's recognition that 'we remember culturally, as we do individually, by conventions of emphasis, foreshortening and omission.'<sup>6</sup> For Steiner, texts are 'embedded in specific historical time [and] in order to [read fully] one must master the temporal and local setting ... which attach [them] to the surrounding idiom [and thereby] restore all that one can of the immediacies of value and intent in which speech actually occurs' (1992 26, 17, 24). In other words, translation of all communication or speech acts is necessary because the networks of conventions, beliefs and symbolic practices embedded in language change with time. Steiner emphasises the need for contextual translation-interpretation of all communication, commenting that 'history is a speech-act, a selective use of the past tense [and that in order to understand it, every] reader, actor, editor [must become] translators of language out of time', engaged in the 'never-ending ... act of internal translation' (1992 28-29, 30-31).

Since antiquity, translation has been confined to an inter-lingual production of equivalences rather than a process.<sup>7</sup> Critics generally evaluate a translation from one or two limited viewpoints: the closeness of the Target Language (TL) to the Source Language (SL) text (an evaluation that can only be made if the critic has access to both languages), or, monologically, the treatment of the TL text as a work in their own language. The latter position, while valid, is bound by the target culture and evaluated by the canonical criteria of the established discursive system and the cultural forms it encourages. When Friel's rewritings are cited as falling between these two stools, as being neither close to the SL nor original works, they are subjected to superior-inferior evaluation criteria and judged as ineptly inappropriate, and as invalid as Spenser's assertions that Gaelic was a barbarous and seditious tongue. Perpetuating this type of inappropriate evaluation, critics<sup>8</sup> attempt to measure Friel's rewritings by an immutable 'standard' of philological exactitude, when they can be more

meaningfully read and interpreted as *one* manifestation of a range of rhetorical responses to the potential for *inventio* in translation, and its capacity for re-visioning. Friel's rewritings should be examined in terms of their initiatives, their strategies and contestatory objectives, performance efficiency, and critical response to these dynamics. In short, the 'why' and 'how' of these works should be read within the Irish socio-political context, observing whether or not they have been heard or received as independent plays of enquiry and decolonisation.

Friel's plays are not inter-lingual products governed by notions of literal equivalence. They are rewritings taken from existing 'standard' English and American-English translations, re-translated into Hiberno English. Just as nineteenth-century translations of Homer and Virgil into vernacular English and German demonstrated that these languages were capable of reproducing the classics of past civilisations, so Friel asserts the right of Hiberno English to represent Turgenev and Chekhov to Irish audiences.

By substituting Hiberno English vernacular for 'standard' English, Friel's versions confirm both an inter-connection and differences between the two language systems, as well as signalling the absent Gaelic language they replace. Through synecdoche, phrasing and rhythms, these rewritings reclaim that absence, and interpret the ongoing dialectic between 'standard' English and Hiberno English, a dialectic which is double-edged, confirming on the one hand a relationship between them and their differences *and* a sense of absence as part of contemporary Irish experience, but on the other hand, promoting renewal through self-reference.<sup>9</sup> By displacing 'standard' English, Friel re-members Gaelic, re-claiming it through Hiberno English lexis, grammar and syntax, so that his rewritings function like palimpsests. He does not seek to erase 'standard' English, but displaces it in order to place Hiberno English, literally, stage-centre while critically re-membering the Gaelic world. In this sense, as Michael Cronin argues, translation entails enrichment through expropriation but it also checks condemnation.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, as Susan Bassnett-McGuire and others recognise, translation (and evaluation thereof) is never disinterested but actively processes and licences what is held to be relevant and adequate *or* not.<sup>11</sup> Ireland has witnessed radical changes in language use over the centuries so that translation has become an integral element in political, linguistic and cultural self-knowledge. Consequently, Friel's efforts exist in a venerable Irish continuum that examines the contact zone between languages and how translation between these affects both the development of language and literature and the construction of identity.

Asserting aesthetic self-reference and replying to Matthew Arnold's attack on his translation of Homer, Francis Newman declared that while scholars may be 'the tribunal of

erudition', 'the educated and unlearned public' is the only rightful adjudicator of taste. In rebutting Arnold's 'tone of the centre', Newman asserts that just as language lives through multiplicity of function, so also does translation. Accordingly, he rescored Homer not in hexameters, as prescribed by Arnold, but in an analogical ballad meter closer to his potential (target) audience's tradition, just as Friel rescored the Russian authors in the rhythms and cadences of his communities.<sup>12</sup> For Newman, as for Friel, the essential variant is what the translator sees as significant and vital in the source text and reworks in order to pass on. Choices are made. In Friel's case these are governed by his intention — decolonisation.

## ii voicing the shadows and silences

In 1904 James Joyce sent his translations of Gerhart Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang* and *Michael Kramer* to W.B. Yeats, hoping that they might be performed by the Irish Literary Theatre.<sup>13</sup> Yeats, not a fluent German speaker, rejected them, telling Joyce that he was not as accomplished a German scholar as he imagined himself to be.<sup>14</sup> While Yeats's rejection is an example of the power of the theatre manager and critic, Joyce's efforts (completed in 1901 when he was nineteen) exemplify the intense translation activity in Ireland at the beginning of the twentieth century which contributed to the cultural revival. Out of this Irish ferment emerged two national literatures, a ceaseless movement between languages and a birth that would have been literally and figuratively inconceivable without the labour and profits of translation since, as Louis Kelly comments, the 'approach to another is not the peaceful process of legend, but often a violent assessment of self in relation to another person.'<sup>15</sup> In retrospect it is possible to see something of the complexity of this process in the much-quoted 'dean of studies' passage concerning Joyce's Stephen in *Portrait of An Artist As a Young Man* (published in 1916).<sup>16</sup> Examining the dynamics of the colonised and the coloniser, Edward Said summarises Joyce's work as a recapitulation of silences: 'the political and racial separations, exclusions, prohibitions instituted ethnocentrically by the ascendant European culture throughout the nineteenth century.' Kristeva describes this condition as the 'silence of polyglots' (1988 26-27). What Said and Kristeva alert us to is the alterity of language, an unknown geography, a landscape negotiated only through constant translation and enquiry into the network of systems mapping it. For this reason, Said's caution against confining critical re-reading to an opposition of metropolitan colonialist centre and oriental and barbarian colonised periphery can be productively applied to the displaced voice in Friel (Said. 1984. 48). Asserting the validity of differences and strangeness, Friel's translations reject the silence imposed upon the subaltern by the Western phonocentrism that characterises

imperial languages such as English, with their implicit code of definitive interpretation and meaning.

This imposed silence is the condition that threatens the community of Baile Beag (small town) in Friel's *Translations*. But against this silenced sense of self and place, memory remains and, as Friel shows, ultimately challenges and splinters all monologic authority. This is the indomitable silence of knowing that a place generates its own sense, that of native memory, places and associations. However, if on one level Friel suggests that translation can bring about (to use Heaney's words) 'an equal marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind',<sup>17</sup> on another, he shows us that language remains a porous and uneven terrain. It is, in Thomas Kinsella's estimate, the broken geography inherited by all modern writers who, conscious of the irreparable loss of the old Gaelic identity, deal with the realities of a gapped, discontinuous, polyglot tradition.<sup>18</sup> Like Joyce, Friel asserts that only by acknowledging this geography (and its gaps and silences), and the necessary failure of any *one* voice to predominate, can we re-read and re-value differences and 'start seeing.'

Nevertheless, the experience of a violent colonial quagmire makes Friel conscious of the need to acknowledge, even protect, differences while promoting heterogeneity. Alert to the dangers of atrophied grievances, he has Hugh, his hedge-school master in *Translations*, tell us that 'to remember everything is a form of madness' (*T* 445). What Friel warns against here is the danger of pursuing notions of essence and continuity. Accordingly, the temptation to read *Translations* or Friel's three translations as denunciations of the linguistic legacy of colonialism can be avoided only if the significance and intention behind these works, deliberately shadowed with ambiguity, are understood.

This is, I suggest, a process bound up with Friel's re-membering and re-writing, and the performance and critical reception of these works and their enquiries. How these plays are performed, received and pedagogically examined calls for a recognition of the fact that no single interpretation of them or any plays is valid if their enquiries and the task of translation are to continue and function not only as a forum of dialogue but as a catalyst for cultural renewal. Rather than reading *Translations* as linguistic conquest, we can see in the play's transliteration of placenames a negotiation between languages and, to some extent, a compromise imposed by the defeated upon their aggressors. In turn, and perhaps more importantly, Friel's translations of Chekhov and Turgenev make it obvious that translation *is* the condition of contemporary Ireland and that the process is never without purpose and consequences. With *Translations*, the three Russian plays and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, in particular, Friel draws attention to a major failing on the part of the governing systems in

post-Independence Ireland to construct ‘equipment for living’ — a framework of cultural, social and political definitions adequate to and accommodating of the emerging reality of two languages and two literatures. The polemics of the Introduction’s prefacing extracts make it clear that writers such as Corkery, Yeats and Hyde realised that identity requires self-knowledge but that, for whatever reasons, post-1922, Irish self-location did not develop into a critical re-reading of historical, political and cultural inter-penetrations and diffusions. Instead of the *beginnings* necessary for subsequent developments, the *abstractions* of land, faith and race cherished by Hyde, Corkery, Yeats and De Valera created the Republic, but at the cost of bifurcation.

### iii negotiating differences

The present crisis demonstrates that the division of Ireland is the consequence of limited political choice and reciprocal resistance. Rather than a new beginning<sup>19</sup>, confronting the evidence of colonialism and negotiating between the differences and the alienation inherent in language, the present crisis is a smouldering reminder of the inter-relationship between violence and power, signposted in the opening sentences of the thesis Introduction. There I suggested that coercion rather than consent has coloured the politics of Ireland; imperialism, territorial and linguistic subjugation divided Ireland geographically and psychologically. Neglecting to work in concert, analysing and exorcising the inherently oppressive and oppositional dynamics of this imperial legacy carried in language, the ideologies of the North and South have operated antagonistically and divisively. Violence has become endemic. Its presence, left unaddressed, has been officially used as an obstacle rather than a spur to political dialogue. When Hannah Arendt states that ‘violence appears when power is in jeopardy’, she emphasises the inter-relations between political institutions (manifestations and materialisations of power) and the people’s support that lends power to such institutions.<sup>20</sup> In the context of Ireland, it is possible to argue that an understanding of these dynamics (power and violence) is accessible only through a critical re-reading, bearing in mind that while violence may be a manifestation of dissent, and different cultural or political values, its meaning is determined and inscribed in language by government reactions.<sup>21</sup> Failure on the part of the political powers involved to address the current constitutional crisis within a critique of imperialism has caused many writers and commentators to call for a re-reading of the facts, real and perceived, that currently divide Ireland.<sup>22</sup>

In “Writers in Quarantine”, Declan Kiberd suggests that Irish literature (Gaelic and Hiberno English) can be national without being nationalist. The two languages and literatures

of Ireland, he argues, must be recognised as mutually supportive - a dual and not a double vision - rather than permanently locked in mortal combat. He maintains:

All over Europe the borders between national literatures are rapidly disappearing and this is especially true of the fake border between Irish and English - *a division which was never recognised by our finest writers but which is still observed and enforced in every classroom on the island.*<sup>23</sup>

What Kiberd recognises is that the discourses are still preaching division and betrayal, 'the subject people stuff', instead of celebrating differences and cultural interpenetration as inevitable and potentially positive. Together with Michael Cronin, Kiberd acknowledges the value of translation and differences as exemplified, among others, by Joyce and Beckett. Something of the psychological complexities of translation and transition, of being and becoming, is reflected in their displaced characters.

And while Friel is not a polyglot like Joyce or Beckett, like them he interprets and dramatises the surfaces and deep structures of Irish social reference, though from *within* its borders. Like them also, he recognises that the use of 'standard' English in Ireland has been one of the strongest and most immediate influences on Irish lives and that understanding it is a matter of unending enquiry and translation. As a result, the main themes around which this thesis is organised are Friel's consciousness of the impact and influence of the English language in Ireland (as outlined in the Introduction). Friel focuses upon the abrogation of its centrality and epistemic control,<sup>24</sup> the movement of the Irish from one language (Gaelic) into another (English), their development in this second language (a process of translation) and the success or otherwise which attends these several efforts, especially as reflected in Irish education. And while Friel would be among the first to admit that not everything can be taught, he insists that the principles of selection used to structure the literary curriculum are of crucial importance (an opinion shared by Kiberd, Deane and Heaney).

The Irish, Friel maintains, have been educated in an English system where reading Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats has proved to be a formative influence. 'But', he insists, 'if we assume that we have instant and complete access to that literature, we are unfair to it and to ourselves. And we constantly make that assumption because of the common language error' [that the same English is spoken in the two countries]<sup>25</sup>. 'With the use of the English language', Friel comments, 'the understanding of words, the whole cultural burden that every word in the English language carries is slightly different to our burden.' Like Kiberd, Friel believes that apart from Synge, the use and influence of the English language in Ireland in relation to Gaelic have not been addressed by Irish dramatists:

Nobody since [Synge] has pursued this [language issue] with any persistence or distinction and indeed this is one of the problems of the theatre in this country. It is a new and young discipline for us and apart from Synge, all our dramatists have pitched their voice for English acceptance and recognition. This applied particularly to someone like Behan. However, I think that for the first time this is stopping, that there is some kind of confidence, some kind of coming together of Irish dramatists who are now concerned with this [language issue] who have no interest in the English stage. We are talking to ourselves as we must and if we are overheard in America, or England, so much the better.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout both of the above statements, Friel's use of the inclusive 'we' signifies both the enabling and the interrogative nature of his enquiry. What he diagnoses here and contests in his plays is the position of the Irish as a subject-people, always the object of imperfect assimilation to either the culture of the English present or the Gaelic past.

#### iv 'talking to ourselves'

Just as features of any utterance reveal choice, purpose and expressive needs, so also Friel's translations present Irish audiences with a process and intention. To read and to recognise that process is to understand that the task of the translator (Friel) is also the task of the reader (audience). As the prefacing extract from Steiner suggests, 'to hear significance is to translate'; every age and culture translates anew. And herein lies the value of a translation; to hear or find significance across cultures and time. Friel maintains that a translation should *reflect* and *show* the choices, changes and intention which shape it, especially if, as in his case, there is no recourse to the (Russian) source. Like Frank McGuinness, he believes that while the interpretation and productions of 'standard' English and American translations may reflect those cultures, they are inappropriate to Irish audiences. The intention behind Friel's and McGuinness's translations is to develop an independent aesthetic capable of decolonised self-critical evaluation and self-referentiality, central to recuperation, in the Brechtian sense. In Friel's work, recuperation involves interrogatively excavating not only the language and paradigms of the past but the language and patterns of the present. He indicates that in the play between past and present words and the worlds they construct, the potential for betrayal and alienation abounds. But if in the past (as we see in *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*) language has been used to mythologise and create a unifying sacred tradition, this is recuperated and dismantled in order to represent the inevitable — change — in terms of a pluralising future, secular and unfinalised.

Through dramatic representation, Friel encourages self-location and self-reference. Undeterred by his lack of Russian, he disavows notions of equivalence and literalness and, like theorists Gideon Toury and Itamar Even-Zohar, asserts that every translation, whether

intra- or inter-lingual, is a source of enquiry and information. This thesis argues that the vital focus of such translations is not the binary debate of original/copy, superior/inferior or the level of high probability of equivalences between the two works, but the performance efficiency and the target audience's understanding of the enquiry translated. In other words, how effectively productions and performances of the translations provoke questioning and understanding.<sup>27</sup> In this context I maintain that Friel is critically and pedagogically under-read. At a surface level, Friel's efforts are intra-lingual. But the rewording of much of his rewriting, while confirming an inter-connectedness between the two languages ('standard' and Hiberno English), resists the idea that they can any longer be assumed to be the same, or perceived as the language of the centre and of the periphery respectively. In his rewritings, phrasing and individual words such as 'peasant', 'eviction', 'force', 'privilege', 'justice' and 'freedom' carry a different cultural burden in Hiberno English to that of 'standard' English. Accordingly his rewritings challenge not only the universalist assumptions and prescriptions of 'standard' English but the validity of evaluation based upon binary notions of original-copy or literal equivalences. These are, he indicates, part of the Western tendency to fetishise individual authorship and to construct notions of definitive interpretations.

Bassnett-McGuire and others state that matters of authorship and originality are secondary to finding significance and gaining understanding, core aspects of translation. Translation, according to such theoreticians, can be interpreted as enquiry, promoting dialogue and understanding through redefinition. In some respects, Friel's rewritings apparently continue the threadbare arguments of self-definition propounded in the past by Corkery, Yeats and Hyde, but *without* the closure of nationalist polemic. They are, therefore, very different in their aesthetic aim and much more in tune with the critical enquiry of writers like Said, Deane, Kiberd and Terry Eagleton, and with translation theorists such as Bassnett-McGuire, Cronin, Bates and Lefevere, political scientists such as J.G.A. Pocock and linguists like Randolph Quirk. All of these writers affirm that language is inherently plural and that translation is dialogic, an unfinalised process of enquiry and interpretation arising out of an ongoing complex network of relationships among a community, its paradigms and the narratives it produces. For Pocock,

it is part of the plural character of political society that its communication networks can never be entirely closed, that language appropriate to one level of abstraction can always be heard and responded to upon another, that paradigms migrate from contexts in which they have been specialized to discharge certain functions to others in which they are expected to perform differently.<sup>28</sup>



Pocock's observations on the plurality of society and its networks concur with those of Said, Steiner, Deane and Terry Eagleton. In common they assert that because of the *plural* character of language, all communication (oral or written) involves interpretation and understanding not only of the words used and the burden behind them but also of the accompanying cultural context. Each act of communication requires translation of private and public signals, since both reflect aspects of and contribute to, the existing context and history of thought. In an Irish context, two factors need to be considered. Firstly, the history of Ireland (like that of any colonised culture) has been bedevilled not by language contact *per se* but by the context of that language contact. Secondly, since the history of thought cannot be determined outside language, it is inevitable that the migration of paradigms becomes a direct function of translation, first intralingual, then into other languages. Thought, like language, arises out of socio-political experience. It is neither freestanding nor finalised but related and ongoing. It is part of an inherited nucleus of thought and knowledge, open to growth and constant re-reading. As Blake reminds us, 'A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.'<sup>29</sup> This plurality of private and public experience, perception and expression, is rooted in the plurality of language itself and refracted through historical and literary narratives. Friel represents this subjectivity, the 'I'-ness of experience, with multiple perspectives, and dramatises the fact that Babel is our home and translation our necessary condition. Thus it is possible to argue that because language is never standard (but always personal) communication, while possible, is never simple or completely equivalent. Writing in 1982, Randolph Quirk comments:

Frank public statements on Irish English and its status are still rare, and standardization has proceeded largely without benefit of any official establishment structure corresponding to Comhairle na Gaeilge, but the fact is that the chief national language of the Irish Republic is cultivated Irish English. Irish history, north as well as south, might well have been different if the constitution had designated this as 'Irish' and had proceeded from the 1920s to make explicit its standards with the full panoply of dictionary and other insignia of linguistic independence.<sup>30</sup>

Quirk recognises that post-1922, the governing systems, North and South, did little to bring the socio-political and linguistic networks into living experience. Calling in 1983 for a Dictionary of Irish English, Tom Paulin offered a less detached perspective on the language question. Arguing that Hiberno English was homeless, 'a language without a lexicon, a language without form', Paulin suggests that a dictionary and 'a federal concept of Irish English would redeem many words from that too-exclusive, too-local, usage which amounts to a kind of introverted neglect.'<sup>31</sup> While a dictionary would be an invaluable source of reference, surely any critical consideration of language issues must focus upon context and

the dialectic this keeps open and ongoing? What safeguards prevent such a dictionary from being enshrined in the 'fixed' manner in which 'orthodox' translations are privileged as sacrosanct? Asserting the open ground of differences and examining the dialectic thus posed in specific plays, this thesis rejects the way in which critics have 'fixed' these and re-reads them in terms of an identifiable translation process. I maintain that Friel's translations are not form or system-oriented but driven by an interrogative communicative function, pluralistic in its thrust, and that it is, therefore, possible to view and value them differently.

Echoing the linguistic relativism of Newman, Joyce and Steiner (that language carries a specific world-view), E.S. Bates draws attention to the subjective element in the theory and practice of translation, stating that both remain 'subject to taste and temperament rather than to knowledge.'<sup>32</sup> Bates's comment on the fickle, even fragile quality of the concept of translation confirms Steiner's assertion that apart from those on his 'Seneca -to- Quine' list, little that is new or fundamental has been achieved in theory or in practice. As the more recent research studies of Bassnett-McGuire, Cronin, Lefevere and Eagleton affirm, however, contemporary translation studies are traversing new, pluralistic ground beyond classical, empirical strictures. These writers assert that translation studies challenge the bastions of equivalence and Source-Text orientations in a manner akin to, and perhaps even related to, the post-modern assault resulting in 'the death of the author.' According to Eagleton, through the notion of intertextuality, all texts can be read as translations, 'all writing [as] a perpetual transformation of other texts.' Eagleton challenges not only the strictures of equivalence and Source Text dictates but equally the Dilthey 'empathetic' school. 'The problem of translation', he states, 'is a paradigmatic case of all hermeneutical enquiry - of that "fusion of horizons" between one world of meanings and another, of which Hans-Georg Gadamer speaks in *Truth and Method*.'<sup>33</sup> This 'fusion of horizons' or 'mirroring' is the recommendation or call for survival through understanding and accommodation advocated by Hugh in *Translations*.<sup>34</sup>

In terms of translation generally and Friel's rewritings particularly, it is clear that we come to the task of seeing and evaluating them from the outside, 'after the fact' and through performance. However in Friel's case, by examining his statements of aims and practice, and especially his disavowal of the empirical principles of literal equivalence, it is possible to view performances and critically assess the strategies underlying his choices in relation to the significances he prompts us to hear and understand. As indicated in the Introduction, his purpose and practice are neither unique nor isolated.<sup>35</sup>

Asserting Irish aesthetic independence in a manner discerned by Quirk, Friel opens up new critical and imaginative spaces, offering Irish audiences versions of Turgenev and Chekhov more relevant to them than 'standard' English translations. By overlaying the English translations with Irish cultural differences, he controls the means of conveying Turgenev and Chekhov and *shows* or makes visible the differences between the two languages and their cultural burdens. Thus his rewritings resist incorporation into the standard literary mode, not because the Irish cannot understand 'standard' English but because their own Hiberno English can more meaningfully convey the conventions and experiences of the Russians' enquiries. These rewritings not only assert the right to representation in their own idiom, but re-appropriate the agency of 'standard' English to speak for them. Moreover, Friel's versions are performance-oriented translations, that is, expressed in a mode and idiom conducive to communication and enquiry in a contemporary Irish context. In his own way, Friel, as translator, sacrifices form to function (audience response) because, while re-appropriating Turgenev and Chekhov from 'standard' English translations, he wants Irish audiences to see and hear characters from 'Finner and Tullamore', not from Bloomsbury backgrounds. In this sense his translations abrogate the assumptions of authenticity and essence which underlie 'standard' English translations and, by unapologetically having Irish actors interpret the enquiries of Turgenev and Chekhov, Friel empowers his audiences to critically re-read these past worlds as though first-hand, trusting that by such idiomatic encounters they will be changed empathetically by or at least open to, the experiences of others, without diminishing or domesticating their differences.

#### **v clearing new spaces, re-reading old gaps**

Through instances of familiarisation and hybridisation (both signalling differences) Friel dismantles the idea of a single voice and verisimilitude in order to re-appropriate representative agency, asserting the right to represent the Russian enquiries in the idiom of his audiences — Hiberno English.<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, the effects of familiarisation and hybridisation, in certain instances, bring a layered, even ambivalent texture to Friel's versions. This is apparent, for example, in his reconfiguration of characters such as Chekhov's Chebutykin and Turgenev's Shpigelsky. In each rewriting, where allusions are various, familiar rhythms of vernacular syntax are used to create an almost interruptive effect in the dialogue. In his *Three Sisters*, for example, Friel has Natasha suggest that the elderly Anfisa should go back to 'the bog' since she can no longer work hard, and the three sisters articulate their fear that Natasha is intent upon 'evicting' them. Single words such as 'bog' and 'evict' are powerfully allusive, interrupting dialogue sharply and engendering an historical

resonance. These words are not used as nostalgic recuperation of hard times (although that is one possible interpretation); they signal and demonstrate both an interpenetration of cultures and discourses and, consequently, a heterogeneity. They function like stammers of familiar (but forgotten) memory in *Translations* (for example, the Tobair Vree passage) and are heard as doubly strange in the Russian plays.

In the rewritings' Lists of Characters, Friel uses patronymics (commonly used in Irish and Russian situations to indicate 'son or daughter of'). Yet they are hardly used in the plays and even sometimes used inaccurately. In Friel's *Fathers and Sons*, for example, one character is listed as Fenichka Fedosya Nikolaevna and later Nikolai Kirsanov refers to her as Fenichka Fedosya which is the equivalent of calling her 'Maggie Margaret', a use that would register as familiar with Irish audiences.<sup>37</sup> The point is that Friel deliberately mis-uses patronymics to undermine the inherent class structures inscribed in the original and does so by inventing (Irish) moments of familiarity inconceivable in the Russian context. Through Hiberno English, the alteration subverts the class dynamics behind the Russian convention. Thus in the novel Odintsova is called 'Anna' by her sister but not by anyone else. This is not the case in the play. Similarly, in Friel's version, the servant, Piotr, addresses Arkady as 'Arkady', who in turn greets the servant and thanks him for his help. Another telling example of this dismantling of boundaries concerns Bazarov, when Friel has him tell the maid, Dunyasha, that she is 'beautiful and desirable', in front of Odintsov! These alterations by Friel might well be construed as social gaffes but they are, in fact, strategies central to his focus upon repressed emotions and limited self-expression. They may well be interpreted as unorthodox, even irreverent, but they are significant within Friel's scheme of decolonisation. Moreover, these alterations challenge the absence of such freedom of self-location in equivalent *Irish* nineteenth century novels by Maria Edgeworth or plays by Wilde or Shaw, whose works ostensibly portray relations between the landed gentry and peasants but are more revealing of the imperial residue in Irish discursive practices. In short, Friel's strategies develop new aesthetic and psychic social spaces. This assertion, a central argument in this thesis, is examined in each play analysis in the context of representation, value and meaning revealing that Friel's new ground, situated and partial, is contestatory. It makes much of the struggle and journey towards self-location without promising solutions or arrival, an aspect virtually ignored by Irish critics.

Thus identifiably Irish character, convention and dialogue alterations reference the world of Turgenev and Chekhov, making it familiar and accessible. By bringing the enquiry of Turgenev and Chekhov closer to Irish experience, Friel's versions use 'standard' English

translations as 'stepping stones', asserting the differences and distance between these two language and cultural systems in order to create new representative space in the manner discussed by Ngûgî wa Thiong'o. Clearly, Friel believes that, apart from Synge, the issues of language, representation and aesthetic independence have remained unaddressed. With repeated comments about 'excavating', 'clearing the building site' and 'finding a language to embrace all', he indicates his intention and involves his audiences. And while his theatre is frequently described as a language laboratory, it is a highly political venture. By re-appropriating Turgenev and Chekhov from 'standard' English assimilation, Friel privileges communicative function (performance efficiency) over form *and* repoliticises Hiberno English representative space relinquished by predecessors. He does so, as outlined in the Introduction, because he recognises that aesthetic and critical forms *can* significantly alter and change our world-views.

Through strategies of substitution and invention, Friel's texts become Janus-like, looking at 'standard' English but accessing the Russian enquiries through the reflections and expression of contemporary Hiberno English. The extent to which Friel's intention has been understood, or is examined within the Irish literary discourse, is, in itself, a constant enquiry within this thesis and relates not only to a recognition of cultural differences but also to questions of identity, representation and valuing systems in Ireland as outlined in the Introduction.

This thesis argues that Friel's theatre provides 'a forum for the life of the mind, of whatever persuasion', inviting audiences to examine their own dispositions, the sources of their sympathies and loyalties and their understanding of them. Such a forum involves audiences in a critical examination of their pasts, individual and socio-cultural, by bringing into focus the inextricably linked issues of language, identity and national self-realisation. When he asks if these words have any meaning at all, Friel poses a series of questions radically opposed to the abstractions of Corkery or Yeats. Such questions are part of his intention to involve people in critical dialogue, more comparative and less partial, by encouraging a re-reading of the inherited tradition and an examination of the ramifications of post-industrial materialism in Ireland, North and South. Friel, who perceives history as replete with recurring patterns but unfinalised, uses the enquiries of Turgenev and Chekhov, a culture apart, to emphasise the commonalities of the human condition, especially where complicated by an imperial residue, linguistic or other. He does so, apparently, with complete simplicity, using the repetition of familiar, single words and phrases to create echoes which, on the one hand gather strength and significance, showing the gaps among characters'

thoughts, words and actions but on the other, enquire into our own understanding of the dynamics afoot.

Friel is acutely aware of the power of language and maintains that such a dialogue can only be effected through Hiberno English, the language of audiences' specific world-view, subjective and subject to taste and temperament as well as knowledge. By showing the Irish themselves, Friel prompts his audiences to re-read their acceptance of *the given* ('standard' English and the world-view it constructs) and its impact in relation to Irish self-realisation. On stage Friel's characters speak as purposively and positively as Heaney's persona in 'Station Island'.<sup>38</sup> They reject the 'subject people stuff' and, through the imaginative and critical exercise of Hiberno English, re-member the Irish body, self-located and secondary or subordinate to no other.

Like all rewritings, Friel's translations reflect certain ideological and poetical manipulations undertaken in order to bring about change, here specifically in relation to the differences between 'standard' English and Hiberno English. But by insisting that the available 'standard' English versions make any others redundant and thereby dismissing Friel's versions as unnecessary, several critics ironically contribute to the dialectic between the two languages' systems. By ignoring Friel's intention and reducing his invention and strategies to Irishisms, colloquialisms and idiom (i.e. anomalies outside the 'standard' English language system) such critics disallow or fail to recognise the point of these strategies and reinforce the stereotype of the Arnoldian anti-intellectualism of the Celt. Friel encourages self-location and an independent aesthetic space precisely because he recognises that idiom, understanding and evaluation are culture-bound. Words and their semantic fields *vary* according to language and situation and, whether within or between languages, translation is the daily task of signification, implicit in every speech act.

It is both possible and valid to argue that Friel, rather than simply substituting colloquial or vernacular expression for the metropolitan, is in fact rewriting the enquiries of others in order to recuperate aspects of them in relation to Irish experience. Time and again he reiterates this anti-essentialist stance and voices his proclivity, similar to that of Deane and Heaney, towards re-reading old certainties in order to critically re-define the past in relation to the present. Friel insists that a decolonised imagination *can* critically re-read and re-vitalise traditional aesthetics and thereby perform 'Ireland' differently, even uncertainly because, as he states in his latest play, 'that uncertainty is necessary' (*GAD* 80).

Thus Friel foregrounds the hybridised and evolving nature of contemporary Irish society. And, because Turgenev's and Chekhov's enquiries into reform and modernisation remain

vital, Friel is able to use their works as historical synecdoche, bringing them into comparative focus through an Irish understanding of these same issues.

In considering this realignment of perspective, it is pertinent to note the observations of Elisaveta Fen in her introduction to Chekhov's plays. Fen states that the disappointment and depression in Russia from the 1880s to 1900 were the result of the failure to reform, and suggests that the country, 'undergoing a process of partial proletarianization [whereby] her impoverished peasants were being driven off the land into new opened factories [was] passing through a phase of reaction and retrenchment.'<sup>39</sup> In the 1980s, beset with continuing violence stemming from a lack of political and economic reforms, Friel's communities would have been particularly able to identify with his version of *Three Sisters*, which reiterates Chekhov's examination of modernisation and the demise of traditional values. But whereas Chekhov's play is frequently performed in 'standard' English to reflect the demise of a privileged class and a mood of almost spiritual discouragement, even helplessness, Friel's *Three Sisters*, like his version of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, prompts *hope* for change through a re-definition of traditional values and transitions. Any sense of personal insignificance in the face of the absurd or overwhelming circumstances present in Chekhov or Turgenev is not emphasised by Friel. Instead, through alterations, there is a focus upon the women's abilities or inabilities to cope with change and effect renewal. The strong or formidable woman already existed in the Russian tradition almost as a type.<sup>40</sup> Friel aligns this type with the 'Juno' ethos which characterises many strong female Irish dramatic types. Similarly, because many of the Russian males appear inept, Friel is able to use these Russian character-types to heighten his own enquiries while largely leaving intact the significance of the Russian works. When critics suggest that he should have transported the Russian plays, 'lock, stock and samovar' to Baile Beag (his perennial *mise en scène*) they fail to recognise the purpose behind the differences and commonalities generated by alteration and intertextuality by Friel in these rewritings. I maintain that the effects Friel searches for are subtle re-orientations, not massive (magical) transformations.

In *The True Interpreter*, Louis Kelly points out that in measuring the translations of predecessors, the temptation is to read differences between translations as deficiencies.<sup>41</sup> He argues instead that translations be read in terms of their time, function and goals, observing the varied relationship between theory and practice and the inevitable evolution of a text in relation to its social function. Kelly recognises that all texts, from Bible to cereal box, are message-bearing. Like Cronin, Said, Steiner, Deane and Eagleton, he insists that all narratives convey meanings and reflect aspects of social processes. They also affirm that

narratives are processes, and that none is finalised or freestanding since each is gapped and inextricably bound up with the flux of the surrounding world and its socio-political consciousness.

In *Translating Ireland*, Michael Cronin claims that by underlining the central role of translation in Irish culture, it is possible to make a case for dialogue and renewal. Cronin asserts that the translation of the languages and cultures of Ireland in this century and the next will require 'receptiveness, reciprocity, confidence and courage' and a new literary vernacular, warning that 'the translators should not be found wanting.'<sup>42</sup> He points out that Friel is not alone among Ulster writers in drawing attention to the question of language, language shift and translation, and cautions against the temptation of reading Friel's and John Montague's examinations of language and translation as a simple denunciation of the linguistic legacy of colonialism. Cronin quotes W.J. McCormack's advice that 'rather than see this phenomenon [transliteration] ... simply as damning evidence of colonialism, we should additionally see it as a negotiation between languages, even to some extent a compromise imposed by the defeated upon their aggressors.'<sup>43</sup> Cronin maintains that while the historical indictment is present in the work of Friel and Montague, 'the ultimate argument for a contemporary audience is that translation is our condition.'<sup>44</sup> Recognising that this condition is bedevilled with all the uncertainties that the process implies, Cronin warns that the alternative, as befalls Friel's Sarah in *Translations*, is silence, 'the muteness of fear.' Ultimately, Cronin's study confirms 'the ancient necessity of a practice that at crucial periods in Irish history has provided the openness that has sustained hope.' Friel's translations nurture this emotion by encouraging questioning and change. I believe that *Translations* was the first work in which Friel himself fully explored the nature and power of translation, of code changing. While writing this play he was simultaneously engaged in writing his version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, with its central theme of changing times announced by the striking of the clock and Olga's recollection of her father's funeral to which 'not many people came.' Something of Chekhov's sisters' vulnerability and isolation in their provincial garrison town informs Friel's *Translations*. Arrivals and departures are manifold. A recurring sense of disjunction and incoherence occurs when language fails to accommodate characters' experiences and patterns of confusion and decay abound.. The worlds of both *Three Sisters* and *Translations* face radical change. But out of these moments of crisis and silence Friel creates positive enquiries, insisting that patterns can be broken and transformed. This is one aim behind Friel's theatre, focusing upon the politics of language and the necessity for translation.



## vi additions and subtractions

In Chapters Three, Four and Five I examine how, in his translations, Friel effects code changes through the additions and subtractions made to the ‘standard’ translations consulted. Such operations or interventions are akin to the strategies adopted by an orthodox translator in that they involve choices and constraints. And while Friel does not use a bi-lingual approach in his reconstructions, his strategies justify examination. His rewritings, like all creative endeavours, acquire their identity through use, through performance and response within their *own* literary polysystem. Friel’s translations gain specific identity through their unique challenge to established ‘standard’ English translations and, analogously, their challenge to Irish nationalist paradigms. In this sense they are interrogative and transformative in their strategies. Friel does not adopt a formulaic approach across these three works, but his efforts are governed by a singular intention. At its simplest, this might be described as promoting *understanding* through communication which in itself is revealed to be as ‘gapped, discontinuous and polyglot’ as the culture we call ‘Irish.’<sup>45</sup>

Accordingly, Friel sets us the task of understanding that all communication, whether between languages or within a language, involves translation and interpretation. Whether as inter- or intra-lingual translators, we must ask not only what a text or utterance contains, but why and how. Such translation and interpretation involve an examination of at least three components: specific function and goal; description and analysis of operations; and critical comment on the relationship between goal and operations.

Friel’s rewritings of the Russian works is an act of re-territorialisation. They represent, literally, new ground, neither Nationalist nor Unionist, neither anti-British nor ‘bog trotter’, but securely and unapologetically Irish. To paraphrase Seamus Deane, they are actualities, not abstractions. These rewritings present identifiably Irish actors representing Russian enquiries, but creating their own starting point as opposed to accepting ‘a merely given, or simply available, starting point’, because Friel, like Said, recognises that ‘beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to enable what follows from them.’ (1985 16). As mentioned in the Introduction, Friel has indicated that he rewrote not to eclipse the existing ‘standard’ translations or to measure the past against standards of the present, but out of a vital compulsion which he describes as a ‘decolonisation of the imagination’, his shorthand phrase for an ongoing cultural enterprise of re-reading. In words that echo the philosophical enquiry of Paul Ricoeur, Friel asks, ‘how do we remain active and critical without reference to all that has gone before?’<sup>46</sup>

Friel's translations, like those of Edward Bond and Trevor Griffiths before him, challenge a dominant mode of translation, performance and production. Bond and Griffiths alter Chekhov's enquiry into the possibilities of change in their own revitalised examinations of conflict and confusion in their society.

Like Friel's own plays, his translations are 'stepping stones' demonstrating that 'the other side' is not a single position of deference to others but a constant movement towards self-location and between differences, something he probes and prompts in his communities. Thus his translations challenge British cultural elitism and its interpretative hold on the understanding and representation of the Russia of Turgenev and Chekhov. Coincidentally, he continues his own interrogative movement, tracing and re-mapping the changing contours of Irish culture through a Russian lens, but challenging Irish self-perceptions and the notion of an exhaustive translation in any culture. As such, Friel's translations form part of a Field Day group of translations in the 1980s<sup>47</sup> but they are also independent texts challenging two established poetics, British *and* Irish. He moulds his texts by the function he assigns to language, a finite code capable of infinite use and involving those concerned in an endless hermeneutics. He has made translation choices; what these are and what they indicate remain as crucial to any response to these three translations as to any of his works.

These translations indicate Friel's independent aesthetic purpose, highlighting his assertion that while it is impossible to erase the encoded and engrained figurative, critical and political concepts in the Irish discourse, it *is* possible to interrogate them.<sup>48</sup> He insists that these concepts can be re-read and re-defined. By translating and re-translating them, Friel's rewritings contest established 'standard' English translations, rewriting them in an Irish-English idiom that *simultaneously* cautions the Irish against their own essentialist tendencies.

Friel regards the central function of translation as a shaping force for renewal so that these translations can be examined in terms of his rewriting strategies, and he regards his individual understanding of translation as synonymous with enquiry and re-definition. All his work reflects this ethos of literature as translations and as enquiry. Rejecting the shoneenism of many predecessors, he comments that now 'what many of us are doing is writing for ourselves'; in various interviews he has expanded upon this idea of 'talking to ourselves' and 'finding voice in a language not our own.'<sup>49</sup> In 1980, Friel commented: 'for people like ourselves, living close to such a fluid situation, definitions of identity have to be developed and analysed much more frequently.'<sup>50</sup> This concept of self-reference and self-location through aesthetic decolonisation is one of the energies behind the (houseless) Field Day

Theatre Company; the idea of writing for and performing to varied Irish audiences rather than any other. Friel's *Translations* began this process.

It is possible to analyse Friel's translations in terms of their challenge to both the dominant 'standard' English interpretation and production of the Russian works *and* Irish self-perceptions while acknowledging that all assessment (my own and that of others) is culture bound (an issue addressed in Chapters Six and Eight, examining critical response). Friel's translations, read within the framework of this challenge, form an integral part of his body of work.

Like an emboldened, postmodern Stephen Dedalus, Friel states:

For us today the situation is ... complex. We are more concerned with defining our Irishness than with pursuing it. We want to know what the word 'native' means, what the word 'foreign' means; we want to know have the words any meaning at all. And persistent considerations like these erode old certainties and help clear the building site.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly, Friel believes language, as one of our main communicative codes, depends upon an admission of plurality and relativity rather than upon notions of origins, essence or completeness. He sees that such a recognition could explode the exclusive myths which have divided Ireland. Such an admission could, he suggests, keep dialogue open 'until we find ... some kind of generosity that can embrace the whole island.' Repeated here, this statement, implicitly challenging the opposing polemics, emphasises Friel's awareness that re-readings can promote new meanings and connections between the past and present, and between literary and other discourses.

Individually Douglas Hyde, Sheila Falconer, William Bedell Stanford and Michael Cronin note a tendency among medieval translators to privilege the target language rather than the source language, confidently naturalising the original or departing freely from it in order to highlight what was of significance and interest to their target audiences.<sup>52</sup>

Translation is an ongoing process, open to constant reinterpretation through rewriting. It can be a process which can help us understand the construction of reality in the worlds in which we live, and their discourses. Just as Newman rescored Homer in a ballad form, and Lady Gregory rewrote Molière in 'Kiltartan', so Friel rescored chosen Russian authors in the rhythms and cadences of the 'grafted tongue' of his communities.

## **vii conclusion — transforming divisions**

Using strategies of intervention, omission and emphasis, Friel manipulates the English literary framework of these texts irreverently, opening them up to a play of difference and

refusing a single viewpoint. As a consequence, his translations, rewritten in an Irish idiom, are an assault on the established translations not unlike that of the analytical Cubist who fractures and restructures the established perspectival conventions of optical illusion, the *given* reflection, in order to elicit different and differing perceptions. And (again) while Friel states that he trusts his efforts will not offend the purists, it is clear he translates in order to undermine their notions of certainty and to emphasise the gapped, discontinuous polyglot nature of existence. As such, his translations provoke questions relating to his audiences' experiences and attitudes and form part of a wider cultural re-reading, asserting their own appropriative process of interpretive transformation.<sup>53</sup> And, because they openly manipulate and challenge the established framework, they are dialectical and potentially ongoing in their method and process. Whether 'original', translation or re-translation, all literary works reflect aspects of their 'parent' tradition and the embedded power relations and, as a consequence, they require translation. Potentially all literary works lend themselves to translation and all translations are a source of information. This thesis does not ask whether Friel's translations are 'right' or 'wrong', 'superior' or 'inferior.' It questions the assumptions behind such labelling and the notions of 'original' and 'copy' within the context of translation as, for Friel, a regenerative force. In order to comprehend his use of these texts, it is not necessary to trace the repertoire of traditional translation theory and practice but rather to indicate the post-structural paradigmatic departure from these, through intertextuality, which enables Friel to rewrite established translations in an Hiberno English context. At a linguistic-performative level he reveals the level of hybridisation by importing facets of style from the absent Gaelic idiom and contemporary Hiberno English usage. The textured results promote questions and possibilities for change within his audiences through decolonisation and re-territorialisation of Turgenev and Chekhov *and* of Irish aesthetic representation. Focusing upon these several shifts within these translations in terms of performance and response, this thesis investigates Friel's intention and asks whether such strategies have effectively generated enquiry into the inherited (Irish) tradition and its paradigms more than translations based on other hypotheses.

Related to the hypothesis that Friel's translations contribute to a critical and poetical decolonisation is the recognition that the acceptance or rejection of any paradigm depends at least as much on prevailing attitudes as it does on the argument between proponents of new paradigms and defenders of the old. Clearly the value of competing translations and the critical response they generate is crucial to this paradigmatic enquiry. One facet of this thesis investigates to what extent these translations contribute to this enquiry by examining how these works have been received critically. Another examines Friel's alterations and asks if

these, through their reconstruction of the Russian enquiries, generate public questioning or change, and whether this is reflected in the pedagogical examination of Friel's work as a whole. The question of whether these texts, presented as translations, are also regarded by critics and academics as translations has no *a priori* answer. This question and the hypothesis of this thesis can only be examined in the framework of the Hiberno English literary polysystem.

Friel's translations and those of his Field Day associates are unique in their position at the interface of what Michael Longley has described as 'the invisible apartheid' of community conflict, organised violence and the impasse of political compromise.<sup>54</sup> The current political malaise may not inspire hope *but* the search for accommodation continues. Rewritings, such as Friel's, can be examined as mediational narratives and literary fusions of different but not necessarily divided horizons. Retrospective and prospective, derivative and inventive, these rewritings aim to break down signficatory boundaries and initiate new space. The rhetoric of Friel's drama implies that the past needs to be resurrected, re-read and through re-definition, re-employed in the reconstruction of a national social consciousness that acknowledges differences. This is the context of Friel's three translations, reconfigurations of three Russian works where the differences between generations and classes and their values appear paramount but where, nevertheless, life goes on.

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<sup>1</sup>. Julia Kristeva. *Étrangers à nous-mêmes*. Paris: Fayard, 1988. 26-27.

<sup>2</sup>. George Steiner. *After Babel, Aspects of Language and Translation*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992. xii.

<sup>3</sup>. Susan Bassnett-McGuire. "General Editor's Preface." *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. André Lefevere. London: Routledge, 1992. vii.

<sup>4</sup>. For a definition of translation as transformation see Paul St-Pierre, "Translation as a Discourse of History." *TTR* . 6.1. (1993): 61. See also Erika Fischer-Lichte. "Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation". Ed. Erika Fischer-Lichte. *The Dramatic Touch of Difference*. Tübingen: Narr Verlag, 1990. 4-17.

<sup>5</sup>. As indicated in the Introduction, the work of Susan Bassnett-McGuire and that of André Lefevere have opened up the process of translation and reception in a manner antagonistic to the orthodox prescriptions by insisting that translation is a form of growth and they recognise the necessity to strategically alter any piece of work in order to bring it into line with the living experience and conditions of its new reception while remaining alert to the distortions of emphasis that are part and parcel of the act of translation. Susan Bassnett-McGuire. "General Editor's Preface." *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. André Lefevere. London: Routledge, 1992. vii. See also Robert Welch's Preface and his section on Friel, "Isn't this your job to translate?" Robert Welch. *Changing States: Transformations in Modern Irish Writing*. 1993. 224-240.

<sup>6</sup>. See Steiner. *After Babel*. 1992. 29, 47. and Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative*. Vol II. 1984-88. 51.

<sup>7</sup>. In *Translation Studies*, Susan Bassnett-McGuire comments that 'what is generally understood as translation involves the rendering of a source language (SL) text into the target language (TL) so as to ensure that (1) the surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and (2) the structures of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible but not so closely that the TL structures will be seriously distorted.' Bassnett-McGuire comments that this is a 'restricted concept of translation' and goes hand

in hand with the low status traditionally accorded translators. Susan Bassnett-McGuire. *Translation Studies*. London: Routledge, 1980. 2.

<sup>8</sup>. For example, see reviews of Friel's *Fathers and Sons* by Jeremy Kingston. *The Times* 10 July 1987 and Robert Hewison. *Sunday Times* 12 July 1987, discussed in Chapter III part ii.

<sup>9</sup>. See Declan Kiberd, "Reamhra: W.B. Yeats agus an Ghaeilge." *Byzantium*. Eds. Gabriel Rosenstock and Gearilt Mac Eoin. Indreabhán, Cló Iar-Chonnachta, 1991, 13-17 (16, 17 respectively).

<sup>10</sup>. Michael Cronin. *Translating Ireland*. Cork: Cork UP, 1996. 197-200.

<sup>11</sup>. See Gideon Toury. "Translated Literature: System, Norm, Performance, Towards a TT-Oriented Approach to Literary Translation" and Itamar Even-Zohar "Translation Theory Today, A Call for Transfer Theory" in *Poetics Today*. Tel Aviv. Vol. 2:4. (1982): 9-27 and 1-7 respectively and Lawrence Venuti, "The Translator's Invisibility." *Criticism* Spring XXVII 2. (1986) 179-212.

<sup>12</sup>. Francis Newman. "On Translating Homer (1861) & Homer: Last words (1862)." *Matthew Arnold Prose Writings. The Critical Heritage*. Eds. Carl Dawson and John Pfordresher. London, Boston & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979. 69-87.

<sup>13</sup>. Joyce translated Norwegian, German, Italian, French and Gaelic works in to Hiberno English.

<sup>14</sup>. *Joyce and Hauptmann. Before Sunrise*. Trans. James Joyce. Ed. Jill Perkins. San Marino: Huntington Library, 1978. 9-10.

<sup>15</sup>. Louis Kelly. *The True Interpreter, A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1979. 62.

<sup>16</sup>. As Declan Kiberd points out, this passage reflects Gaelic speech rhythms, fragments from *The Love Songs of Connacht* by Douglas Hyde, phrases from Homer and the Latin of Catholic ritual so that this small section exemplifies hybridisation. Accordingly, the excerpt encapsulates the inter-relatedness between language and identity and native and foreign identified by Stephen. James Joyce. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971. 189. See Declan Kiberd. *Inventing Ireland*. 272-274, 332.

<sup>17</sup>. Seamus Heaney. *Preoccupations*. London: Faber and Faber, 1980: 132.

<sup>18</sup>. Thomas Kinsella. 1973. 217.

<sup>19</sup>. See Said 1985 16.

<sup>20</sup>. Hannah Arendt. *On Violence*. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970. 56 and 44 respectively.

<sup>21</sup>. At a judicial level, for example, the suspension of *Habeas Corpus* in the mid nineteenth century to the Emergency Provisions and Prevention of Terrorism Acts of 1973 and 1974. See Lionel Pilkington. "Theatre and Insurgency in Ireland." *Essays in Theatre/ Études Théâtrales*. XII.2. May (1992-94): 129-39.

<sup>22</sup>. See Seamus Deane. "Remembering the Irish Future." Dublin: R.T.E./U.C.D. Lectures, 1984 published in *The Crane Bag* 8.1. (1984): 81-92.

<sup>23</sup>. Declan Kiberd. "Writers in Quarantine." *The Crane Bag* 3.1. (1979): 9-21. See also Kiberd. *Anglo-Irish Attitudes*. Derry: Field Day Publications, 1984.

<sup>24</sup>. See: John Devitt. "English for the Irish - Literature and the post-primary curriculum." *The Crane Bag* 6.1. (1982): 104-109; also Donald Harmon Akenson. *A Mirror to Kathleen's Face: Education in Independent Ireland* Montreal: McGill; Queens University Press, 1975. esp. 35-53.

<sup>25</sup>. Interview. Friel-Gillespie. *Irish Times* 5 September, 1981. 16.

<sup>26</sup>. Interview. Friel-Agnew. *Magill* 1 Dec. (1980): 59-61.

<sup>27</sup>. In line with the arguments of Lefevere, Bassnett-McGuire, Toury and Even-Zohar.

<sup>28</sup>. J.G.A. Pocock. *Politics, Language and Time*. New York: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971. 21; London: Methuen, 1972 and cited in Steiner *Babel*, 1995. 282.

<sup>29</sup>. William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," plate 7.

- <sup>30</sup>. Randolph Quirk. "Language and Nationhood." *Style and Communication in the English Language*. London: Ed. Arnold, 1982. 54-72 (65).
- <sup>31</sup>. Tom Paulin. *A New Look at the Language Question*. Derry: Field Day Publications; Field Day Pamphlet Number 1, 1983.
- <sup>32</sup>. E.S. Bates, *Intertraffic, Studies in Translation*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1943. 15, cited in Steiner, 1992. 289. Cf. Kelly. *True Interpreter*. 1979. 5.
- <sup>33</sup>. Terry Eagleton. "Translation and Transformation" in *Stand* 19.3. (1984): 72-77. See also Jacques Derrida's "Des tours de Babel." *Difference in Translation* 1980: 201 which builds upon his "Roundtable on Translation" (1979) in *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*. Ed. Christie V. McDonald. trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Schocken, 1980. 91-161. See also (1979). Derrida, "Living On." *Deconstruction and Criticism*. Trans. James Hulbert. New York: Continuum, 1979. 75-176, and Eagleton's comments regarding how specific practices and conventions "operate" the text. Terry Eagleton. *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory*. London: New Left Books, 1976. 64-65; 99-100.
- <sup>34</sup>. In this respect, see Steiner *Babel* 1992 vii.
- <sup>35</sup>. For example, the translations of McGuinness, Kilroy, Heaney, Paulin and Mahon. Further afield, see Erika Fischer-Lichte's article, "Intercultural aspects in post-modern theatre: a Japanese version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*" and Werner Habicht's article, "Shakespeare and theatre in the Third Reich", both in *The Play Out of Context. Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*. Eds. Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. 173-185 and 110-120 respectively.
- <sup>36</sup>. 'Tullamore.' like 'Baile Beag,' demonstrates Friel's metonymic use of language and placenames in a manner akin to Joyce's use in *Ulysses* and *Dubliners* where a familiar Hiberno English word, phrase or placename may be used to indicate known and unknown, presence and absence, surface and subaltern aspects of relations.
- <sup>37</sup>. Fenichka is a pet name (hypocorism) for Fedosya. Richard Freeborn makes this clear in his translation when he has Arkady Kirsanov call her 'Fenechka ... Fedosya' in response to Bazarov's enquiry. Richard Freeborn. *Fathers and Sons*. 1991. 50.
- <sup>38</sup>. Seamus Heaney. *Station Island*. London. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984. Section XII, 93.
- <sup>39</sup>. Elisaveta Fen. "Introduction." *Plays by Anton Chehov*. Trans. Elisaveta Fen. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959. 7-34, esp. 8-9.
- <sup>40</sup>. Antonia Glasse. "The Formidable Woman: Portrait and Original." *Russian Literature Triquarterly* 9. (1974): 433-453 (particularly interesting in terms of the characters Anna Odintsova and Natasha Prozorov). Informative studies on the image of 'woman' in Russian literature include: Vera Sandomirsky Dunham. "The Strong-Woman Motif." *The Transformation of Russian Society*. Ed. C.E. Black. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1960. 459-83. See also Joan Delaney Grossman. "Feminine Images in Old Russian Literature and Art." *California Slavonic Studies* XI (1980): 33-70; Barbara Alpern Engel. *Mothers and Daughters, Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russian*. London: Cambridge Press, 1983. and Cathy Porter. *Fathers and Daughters, Russian Women in Revolution*. London: Virago in assoc. with Quartet Books, 1976.
- <sup>41</sup>. Kelly *True Interpreter* 1979 1-5.
- <sup>42</sup>. Cronin *Translating Ireland* 1996 200.
- <sup>43</sup>. W.J. McCormack. *From Burke to Beckett: Ascendancy, Tradition and Betrayal in Literary History*. Cork: Cork UP, 1994. 251 Cited in Cronin, *Translating Ireland*, 1996. 199.
- <sup>44</sup>. Cronin *Translating Ireland* 1996 199.
- <sup>45</sup>. Thomas Kinsella. *The Irish Writer, Davis, Mangan, Ferguson? Tradition and the Irish Writer*. Dublin: Gallery Press, 1970. 13.
- <sup>46</sup>. Interview. Friel-C.Fusco. Greencastle, Donegal 18 Jul.. 1996.
- <sup>47</sup>. In this respect Heaney's *The Cure at Troy* is exemplary, examining the issues of filiation, loyalty, justice and freedom..
- <sup>48</sup>. See Paul Ricoeur. *De l'interpretation*. Paris: Seuil, 1965.

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<sup>49</sup>. Interview. Friel-Carty. *Sunday Independent* 5 Oct. 1980. In this connection, see Gerhard Ebeling regarding the potential for misunderstanding when issues are discussed in the same language but with different postulates on which word-meaning is based. Gerhard Ebeling. *Introduction to a Theological Theory of Language*. Trans. from German by K.A. Wilson. London: Oxford UP, 1973. 95ff; 154ff.

<sup>50</sup>. Friel-Carty *Sunday Independent* 5 Oct. 1980.

<sup>51</sup>. Friel. "Self Portrait." *Aquarius* 3 (1972): 17-22.

<sup>52</sup>. See Douglas Hyde. *The Conquests of Charlemagne*. London: Irish Texts Society, 1917. viii; Sheila Falconer. "An Irish Translation of the Gregory Legend" in *Celtica* 4. (1958) 57; William Bedell Stanford. *Ireland and the Classical Tradition*. Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1976, 11-73. and Michael Cronin. *Translating Ireland, Translation, Languages, Cultures*. Cork: Cork UP, 1996.

<sup>53</sup>. See *Literature and History*. Ed. Gary Saul Morson. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986. 1-30.

<sup>54</sup>. Interview. Michael Longley – Robert Johnstone. "The Longley Tapes." *Honest Ulsterman* 78. Summer (1985): 24.



**Chapter II ‘Translations’ (1980) — a lesson in decolonisation**

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### Chapter summary

This chapter begins by asserting that, in Ireland, language has been used as a political, military and economic resource in cultural and colonial encounters. It aims to read Friel's challenge to this and his exploration of the dying Gaelic tradition as represented in *Translations*, and to assess critical response. I also offer my own reading of the play, examining forces of change and 'modernity' and balance this against preceding criticism. Further, this chapter aims, by relating *Translations* to Friel's translations, to demonstrate how and why it is possible to propose that this play inaugurates Friel's enterprise of decolonisation. It proceeds to argue that Friel's play, written and premièred against a background of escalating violence, urgently presses for a re-reading of the writing of Ireland and a re-invigoration of that tradition.

Section II i expands the historical and literary developments outlined in the Introduction to the thesis and traces the action and reaction of the resulting tradition inherited and re-read by Friel. Sections II ii to Section II vi expand the assertion outlined in the Introduction and Chapter One's claim that the narrative process, whether literary or historical, original or translation, is inextricably bound up with the culture and political consciousness that surrounds it. The chapter sections map out Friel's position in and response to these narrative processes and resources, using aspects of the theories of Edward Said, Paul Ricoeur and George Steiner.<sup>1</sup> Section II vi sketches the divergent critical response *Translations* has attracted, and these are subsequently examined in sections II xi and II xii after the main body of the play analysis in sections II v to II ix. Thus the core analysis, sections II v - II x, culminates in an interpretation of the critical response in sections II xi and xii. The analysis demonstrates that while *Translations* is a foundational play in Friel's aesthetic decolonisation, like other earlier and subsequent plays (particularly his versions of Chekhov and Turgenev) it illustrates the degree to which he is preoccupied with the inter-relationship between the politics of language and the narratives of history and literature, and pedagogy. In this respect, I maintain that *Translations* functions as a creative map whereby spectators may, at a distance, re-read a dramatised interaction of inherited cultural, political and historical paradigms so that 'What might be, or might have been is being asked to put its pressure on, and perhaps alter, actuality; or at least to relieve, to displace, facts which have become intolerable.'<sup>2</sup>

In order to get onto the road towards modernisation, is it necessary to jettison the old cultural past which has been the *raison d'être* of a nation? ... Whence, the paradox: on the one hand, it has to root itself in the soil of its past, forge a national spirit and unfurl this spiritual and cultural revindication before the colonialist's personality. But in order to take part in modern civilization, it is necessary to take part in scientific, technical and political rationality, something which very often requires the pure and simple abandon of a whole cultural past. There is the paradox: how to become modern and return to sources; how to respect an old dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization. (Paul Ricoeur)<sup>3</sup>

The oppressiveness of the tradition we inherit has its source in our readiness to accept the mystique of Irishness as an inalienable feature of our writing ... the notion of Irish unreality, the notions surrounding Irish eloquence .. Everything ... has to be rewritten - i.e. re-read. (Seamus Deane)<sup>4</sup>

## Introduction

The 1366 Statutes of Kilkenny and Henry VIII's 1536 Act of Union are but two examples of decrees exemplifying the repressive and controlling impetus behind the use of the English language in Ireland. Nor was this pressure applied only from without. Loudly complaining "On Barbarous Denominations in Ireland" (1728), Jonathan Swift suggested that the abolition of Irish 'would in Time abolish that Part of Barbarity and Ignorance, for which our Natives are so despised by all Foreigners: this would bring them to think and act according to the Rules of Reason, by which a Spirit of Industry, and Thrift, and Honesty, would be introduced among them.' Ironically reiterating Spenser's flawed logic of changing the language (contagion) in order to change the people, Swift concluded that a major step toward remedying the 'wretched Condition [rests in the] Power of the Lawgivers [who might] found a School in every Parish of the Kingdom, for teaching the meaner and poorer Sort of Children to speak and read the English Tongue.'<sup>5</sup> As J.C. Beckett states, Swift's 'assertion of Irish rights was based less on patriotism than pride. He could not bear the thought of being treated as an inferior: if he was condemned to live in Ireland, then he must make it clear to the world that Ireland was the equal of England.'<sup>6</sup> Brian Friel insists that the task of communication is not to remove but to make productive the refractory distance between past and present, between one's self and the other in relation to language and change.

### i remembering and re-membering the map

Socio-political and cultural values are carried in language, but in Ireland they are given representation at the behest of Irish *and* British executive power embodied in and reflected by their respective discourses. Post-1922 the socio-political and cultural forces which dominated

in the South of Ireland were the values of the farmers - the family and Catholicism.<sup>7</sup> Catholicism, in part, met the needs of a nascent Irish nationalism at a time when the Irish language and Gaelic culture was enduring a protracted decline. However Church and State propagated religious devotion and the idealisation of the Gaelic pastoral while ignoring the fundamental inequalities of wealth and opportunity, North *and* South. While land and religion, Ireland and Catholicism became fundamental elements of stability in the ideology of the Irish Free State, in Northern Ireland (Westminster-financed) the dominant force and cross-class alliance of Ulster Unionism developed an ideology whereby subjectivity was constructed upon an identification of Catholics as Other.<sup>8</sup> The emergence of two insular and oppositional *petit bourgeois* states, one Catholic and the other Protestant, contributed to the sullenness and disaffection which characterised much of the literature of the thirties and forties and which, in part, was frequently a reaction to the Revival and its subsequent socio-political manifestations. Augustine Martin maintains that after the initial Revivalist flurry came a period of disappointment and disillusionment. That after 1922 the mood of Irish writers, exacerbated by censorship, moved from 'heroism to disillusion, from romanticism to irony' so that much of the subsequent literature and critical energy of the new State focused on historical and stereotypical Irish images and notions of essence.<sup>9</sup> One consequence of Ireland's division has been the development of opposing political and cultural positions, borders which, as one character in *Translations* remarks, 'You don't cross ... casually [because] both sides get very angry' (T 446).<sup>10</sup> *Translations* functions as a metaphoric map of fact and fiction, public and private, past and present. Friel's audiences are cast as 'translators out of time'; they are required to examine the represented interaction of socio-political and historical events in the context of 'the temporal and local setting ... which attach [them] to the surrounding idiom.'<sup>11</sup> Friel's audiences (like all audiences caught between words and meaning) are repeatedly asked 'what have you heard?', 'what have you understood?' and 'why?'

## ii culture and consciousness

Friel has declared that there is no point in dwelling in the past except to gain a critical understanding of the present. In his working diary, kept during the writing of *Translations*, an entry for 18 June, 1979 considers the transitional paradigm facing every generation and Friel's fictive community:

The cultural climate is a dying climate - no longer quickened by its past, about to be plunged almost overnight into an alien future. The victims in this situation are the transitional generation. The old can retreat into and

find immunity in the past. The young acquire some facility with the new cultural implements. The in-between ages become lost, wandering around in a strange land.<sup>12</sup>

These comments apparently refer specifically to the historical period re-created in *Translations* but they also relate to the troubled, contemporary 'somewhere' in which the play was written, the constitutional crisis of Northern Ireland in the 1980s. The analogies are many and brought into focus in the play through contact with language differences. Appealing for critical analysis of the recurring crisis of understanding, in the closing moments of the final Act, Friel has a central character, the hedge-school master, assert: 'it is not the literal past, the "facts" of history, that shape us but images of the past embodied in language' (*T* 445).<sup>13</sup> This comment echoes Friel's statement about the symbolic power invested in dates such as 1690 and 1916. For many such dates have become more divisive than the facts they record, and Friel emphasises the need to re-read these, affirming that each generation can and must evaluate their traditions anew.

'The whole problem that the writers in this country experience [is] having to handle a language that is not native ... But I'm not talking about the revival of the Irish language. I'm just talking about the language we have now and what use we make of it.'<sup>14</sup> Two months later, in a climate severely afflicted with violence, Friel declared: 'There will be no solution [to the 'Irish problem'] until the British leave this island, but even when they have gone, the residue of their presence will still be with us. This is an area that we still have to resolve, and that brings us back to the question of language for this is one of the big inheritances which we have received from the British.'<sup>15</sup> Clearly, for Friel, the question of language is inextricably bound up with decolonisation.

### iii challenging and re-reading the tradition

The writing of Ireland and Irish subjectivity is an example *par excellence* of the social conflict of discourses subjected to monological ideological resolution. These oppositional writings have shaped the geography and cultures inherited by Friel, exemplifying Said's perception of the power of language and critical discourse as 'not only [creating] the values by which art is judged and understood, but [embodying] in writing those processes and actual conditions in the present by means of which art and writing bear significance' (1983 53). The writing of Ireland illustrates how a culture may foster supposedly true myths of identity and history which bear little relevance to material reality, but which fuel division and protracted violence.<sup>16</sup>

Faced with the task of understanding the violent manifestations of these oppositions, Friel appeals for discrimination between the laws of history and those of imagination, between the laws of empirical necessity and those of cultural freedom. For Friel, tradition and culture are complex social, historical and political discriminations and evaluations, the significance of which requires the constant re-reading encouraged by Ricoeur and Deane whose words preface this chapter.

‘The difficulty’, for Friel, ‘is what to re-claim. You can’t deposit fealty to a situation like the Northern situation that you don’t believe in. Then you look south of the border and that enterprise is in so many ways distasteful. And yet both places are your home, so you are an exile in your home in some kind of sense.’<sup>17</sup> Standing between the discursive systems and cultures of Ireland, the critical core of *Translations* highlights the ever-evolving paradox identified by Said, Steiner and Ricoeur, of becoming modern and yet retaining contact with erstwhile and relevant aspects of a tradition.

In *Translations*, Friel re-reads a particular historic ‘moment’ in his inherited tradition. He freely dramatises the King’s Ordnance Survey of Ireland, relocating it in 1833, in Baile Beag. It is carried out by English Officers, engineers, and soldiers, assisted by a native translator-go-between, Owen, and it takes place against the backdrop of his father’s hedge school. Using two historical matrices, the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and a hedge school, Friel dramatises acts of mapping and translation, in a scrutiny of the power of language to invest meaning and identity.<sup>18</sup> In this, Friel continues the critical, anti-Romantic stance of expatriates such as Beckett and Joyce, but does so from a deeply rooted Northern perspective. The culturo-political geography of Ireland, and in particular of the North, is, in fact (to invoke Said) the ‘somewhere’ Friel seeks to examine. Dramatised as Baile Beag, this ‘somewhere’ is, like Joyce’s Dublin, ‘everywhere’, a culture forged by power relations carried in language and manifest in the cultural nucleus. Joyce examined the inter-relations between culture and consciousness, and identifies language, and not the English, as the coloniser.<sup>19</sup> When we read Stephen Dedalus’ statement that he will try to fly clear of Davin’s nets of ‘nationality, language, religion’, characterised as manic snares, we are reading an earlier interrogation examining the power relations which inscribe the identity (published in 1916). They are, ironically, the three forms of *ignorance* identified by Yeats in 1903 as plaguing the Irish theatre: the ignorance of intolerant Gaelic propagandism, the Catholic hierarchy’s intolerance of the intellect, and opportunist politicians. They are largely the issues granted privileged status by Daniel Corkery in his immensely influential *Synge and Anglo-Irish Literature - Nationality, Catholicism, and the Land*. In *Translations* they are provocatively represented by

superstition, poverty and emigration, with little likelihood of educational or political intervention.

*Translations* reflects Said's insight that 'the inevitable trajectory of critical consciousness is to arrive at some acute sense of what political, social and human values ... [are entailed] in the reading, production, and transmission of every text' (1982 26). *Translations* also reflects Ricoeur's insistence that history and literature are not divorced but inextricably related to one another and bound up with the culture and the political consciousness that surround them.<sup>20</sup> Ricoeur maintains that the task of interpretation is not to remove but to make productive the refractory distance between past and present, between one's own perceptions and those of others in relation to language. And this distance is identified by him as the 'paradox of otherness', the distance between words and meaning.<sup>21</sup>

For Ricoeur, the term 'tradition' should be understood not as the 'inert transmission of some already dead deposit of material but as the living transmission of an innovation always capable of being reactivated by a return to the most creative moments of poetic activity.' In this sense, tradition is a sedimented history of innovations. It remains relative to the sedimentation as a form of behaviour governed by rules but open to constant challenge and change (Ricoeur Vol 1.1984-88 68). Ricoeur expands:

The labour of imagination is not born from nothing. It is bound in one way or the other to the tradition's paradigms. But the range of solutions is vast. ... It is this variety of applications that confers a history on the productive imagination and that, in counterpoint to sedimentation, makes every narrative tradition possible (Vol 1. 1984-88 69).

Ricoeur maintains that in recuperating the past and tradition, in accessing 'knowledge through traces', narratives and critical response must resist establishing a dogmatic conflict between the 'verities' of history and tradition, and the free invention of critical imagination (Vol. 1 1984-88 11). Similarly, in, "Understanding as Translation", Steiner emphasises the necessity for a productive play of differences and subsequently maintains that understanding as translation 'is no specialized, secondary activity at the "interface" between languages [but] the constant, necessary exemplification of the dialectical, at once [the] welding and divisive nature of speech' (1992 246). *Translations* affirms Steiner's insight that 'every understanding is actively interpretative [and that] even the most literal statement ... has a hermeneutical dimension [which] needs decoding [because] it means more or less or something other than it says' (1992 295). Thus Steiner, like Said and Ricoeur, concludes that language is various and generates a surplus of meaning and interpretation.

The literary and historical discourses Friel inherited reflect this multiplicity of interpretation, manifested as a struggle for self-location and self-definition through the politics of identity. *Translations* imagines this struggle as the historic 'moment' of linguistic translation in nineteenth century Ireland. But in order to demonstrate the limitations of such a politics of identity and the potential for change through transitions, Friel conflates literary and historical sources. He records how he kept 'returning to the same texts: the letters of John O'Donovan, Colby's *Memoir*, *A Paper Landscape* by John Andrews, *The Hedge-Schools of Ireland* by Dowling [and] Steiner's *After Babel*.<sup>22</sup> Aspects of O'Donovan's and Dowling's respective research were developed by Friel into characters such as Hugh, Jimmie Jack Cassie,<sup>23</sup> Owen, Yolland and Lancey, while Andrews' research into the Ordnance Survey supplied Friel with the play's integrative mapping metaphor.<sup>24</sup> That the process of identity (of being and becoming) is neither easy nor literal, but a path of transitions, is demonstrated in the first scene, where a young, lame teacher coaxes an autistic, waif-like girl, Sarah out of silence into uttering the speech-sounds of her own name. Later, the complexity of the self-definition, interpretation and translation process is re-emphasised when, at the close of the play, Sarah's first, vulnerable act of self-definition is reversed and the community is threatened with dispersal and monological silence. This threat comes at the end of a detailed passagework of names, words and places with vital associations, latent and realised. Such passageworks of names, words and places function like echoes which gather force within the play, combining to map out meaning and identity - of the individual, the community and two cultures. The translator and betrayer of these worlds, Owen, younger son of the hedge-school master Hugh, eventually recognises and regrets the consequences of his translations (*T* 444). Without reciprocity and irreversible, they have initiated a process of acculturation (of saming) into English. Yolland, the young, English orthographer, 'a soldier by accident' (*T* 404), also recognises that the new names, efficient as numbers, simply do not reflect the old knowledge. And because the proposed mapping, an act of acculturation, will not allow the two cultures equality (of differences), the reinscribed culture is made Other. By translating his community into Otherness, Owen makes the old values obsolescent; it is an act of betrayal. This is emphasised in the closing scene when the elderly Jimmy Jack Cassie reminds the youthful Maire Chatach of the claims of *endogamein*.<sup>25</sup> With this single word, the action is focused on meaning, identity and differences, belonging and change. The uncertainties of the pre-existing order are ironically emphasised when the hedge-school master falters in his recitation from the *Aeneid*, announcing 'that a race was springing from Trojan blood to overthrow these Tyrian towers.' This fragment reminds audiences of the arrival of the English in Act One and the effect of their language upon Baile Beag. Is it to become another Carthage? On one



level, the fragment confirms the descent of good to bad fortune, pitiable and frightening incidents. On another, it engenders synthesis between the old and new paradigms and cultures. However, in the context of the trio left on stage, this fragment turns the play full circle and emphasises the necessity of self-location which it epitomised through the plight of Sarah.

Thus the play 'ends' with an emergent understanding that self-location is imperative; that it must begin again, in the new language, but re-accentuated. This is implicitly reflected in Hugh's closing words where he forgets the words of the Latin paradigm but tells Maire that he will begin teaching her English 'tomorrow.' Here, time and narrative are humanised in traces of history and imagination. Thus Friel's interrogation of language is made through a passagework of naming and knowledge, neither of which is complete or certain. *Translations* portrays the experience of a culture on the verge of obsolescence but also of *transition*, an ancient and modern story. As a consequence, naming and knowledge, and the conflict between them, are not simply recurring leitmotifs but are shown to be central components of this particular way of life, flowing through the matrices of the Survey and the hedge school. The tradition the school sustains (Gaelic and classical teachings) serves to underline one disability of Baile Beag's inhabitants.<sup>26</sup> Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh points out that the education in the hedge schools was geared towards specific jobs or vocations with an overall policy of suppressing the native language and learning and replacing it with English, 'the language of jobs and progress and social mobility.' His study records that, on the instruction of parents, many teachers kept tally-sticks on which a notch was cut every time a pupil spoke Irish as opposed to English and that 'at the end of the day the pupil was punished *pro rata* with the number of notches.' Ó Tuathaigh, commenting on these national school conditions, maintains 'it is difficult to comprehend the psychological consequences (individual and collective) of this frightful method of forced linguistic change.' Vulnerable and about to be translated into another mind-set by the Survey and the new National School system (with its declared ideal of making every pupil 'a happy English child') they must embrace change. But at what price? One of Friel's characters reports that attendance at the National schools was compulsory from 'the age of six [until] twelve at least ... all day, every day, summer or winter. That's the law' (*T* 395). Historical studies suggest that in fact National school life was short and plagued by absenteeism.<sup>27</sup> Yet if Friel distorts the practice and purpose of the National schools, their anti-national character is unmistakable. The subsidised texts were so devoid of any sense of national identity or cultural reflection that they were 'successfully exported without change to the schools of Australia, Canada, the West Indies and New Zealand.'<sup>28</sup>

The principal agent of change in Ireland was the English language,<sup>29</sup> radically reinforced by the Famine. In 1845, on the eve of that catastrophe, about four million people, or half the population, still spoke Irish as their mother-tongue. Six years later, in a population reduced to about six and a half million, only twenty-three per cent spoke Irish and five per cent were monolingual in that language. Some historians have suggested that English was perceived as a progressive path.<sup>30</sup> This is dramaturgically suggested in the off-stage mother of Maire Chatach and her comments regarding Daniel O'Connell (leader of the movement for Catholic Emancipation). O'Connell hailed the National schools as a 'boon', aiding the Catholic electorate. Friel alludes to this school of thought with references to Daniel O'Connell but links this linguistic advance to the fear of potato blight, both in Act One (*T* 395), before the entrance of the English officers, and again near the end of the Act Three (*T* 441), when they threaten evictions.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Friel represents the dissemination of the English language and of English culture in a broad sense with the development of a National system of primary education which, from the 1830s onward, replaced the hedge-school system, but was thwarted in its efforts to create a truly non-sectarian system of basic education by the major religious sects. With *Translations* Friel re-creates this historic moment but not to write a prescriptive corrective. Rather, he demonstrates *the making* of history and consciousness, with actors and audiences participating in the process. Challenging his audiences' understanding of the past and its relationship to the present, Friel emphasises the danger of remaining closed to the ambivalences endemic in all discourse.

The quandary of consciousness reflected in history and literature was the focus of a 1983 Maynooth interdisciplinary seminar addressed by historian John Andrews and Brian Friel. Kevin Barry, introducing them, suggested that the collision between their texts reflected the larger interpretative struggle between history and fiction. History's claim of objectivity, Barry suggested, with its linear ordering of events, often denies plurality and constitutes its claim to be a separate discourse of reliable testimony. The authority of Andrews' *Paper Landscape* arises from its scrupulous historical documentation, such as the letters of John O'Donovan, the reports of the engineers Colby and Larcom, and the Ordnance maps themselves. But though Andrews records the words of the authorised and empowered involved in the mapping, he excludes those of the displaced and illiterate (Corkery's 'hidden Ireland'). *Translations*, on the other hand, critically imagines the same re-mapping enterprise as an act of masked colonialism.

Friel states that five years prior to reading *A Paper Landscape*, he was working on a play 'set in the nineteenth century, somewhere between the Act of Union and the Great Famine, a

play about Daniel O'Connell and Catholic emancipation; a play about colonialism; and the one constant - a play about the death of the Irish language and the acquisition of English and the profound effects that that change-over would have on a people.<sup>32</sup> Then Friel made two accidental discoveries. He learned that a great-great-grandfather had been a hedge-school master, a discovery that sent him reading Dowling's *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*. He also discovered that directly across the River Foyle from where he lives in Muff, at a place called Magilligan, the first site of the trigonometrical base for the Survey was set up in 1828. Friel then read the historic account of the Ordnance Survey by the man in charge, Colonel Colby (*A Memoir of the City and the North-West Liberties of Londonderry*) and the letters which John O'Donovan wrote during employment on the survey in 1835.<sup>33</sup> These resources were the creative excavation and authority of *Translations*. By his own admission, Friel's starting point was the perspective of the disempowered and displaced. Accordingly, when in his 'Sporadic Diary' (a journal kept during the writing process), Friel emphasises that any political concern must not overwhelm its central enquiry - the power of language - the statement has to be considered in the light of his dramatic treatment of the Survey and his depiction of the British officers.<sup>34</sup>

John Andrews states that, despite inaccuracies in *Translations*, he felt himself carried along by the play until the third Act, where Lancey threatens to shoot livestock and raze villages in retribution for the disappearance of Yolland, his young assistant. Andrews was dismayed at several such historical inaccuracies which, instead of provoking questioning, held the audiences riveted, 'lapping it all up.'<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, he granted that *Translations* was 'an extremely subtle blend of historical truth and — some other kind of truth.' In turn, Friel apologised for the inaccuracies, describing them as 'tiny bruises inflicted on history in the play', but insisted that 'the imperatives of fiction are as exacting as the imperatives of cartography and historiography', an argument supported by Ricoeur.<sup>36</sup>

The Maynooth Seminar serves to re-emphasise Said's recognition that all critical enquiry, whether the writer's or the audience's, must move towards an understanding of the political, social and human values reflected in the text which is always written from 'somewhere.' In *History and Truth*, Ricoeur provides an account of the dilemma facing many post-colonial cultures which can be applied productively to the work of Friel. While acknowledging that the contemporary phenomenon of universalisation generally represents an advance for humankind, Ricoeur notes that it sometimes constitutes a subtle attrition not only of traditional cultures but also of what he calls 'the creative, mythical and ethical nucleus of all great cultures.' These are the nuclei, including the narratives of history and fiction, through

which we interpret our history and make sense of our lives. Within this core Ricoeur identifies the pull between inherited rules (which he calls sedimented paradigms) and innovation. Movement between these can result in conflict and in the perennial paradox: 'how to become modern and return to sources; how to respect an old dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization' (Ricoeur 1965 276). Friel poses exactly this dialectic between tradition and modernity for his community.

In a Ricoeurian manner, the rhetoric of *Translations* suggests that tradition can only be transmitted and interpreted through the layered discourses of history *and* literature. Neither operates according to hard and fast rules. Both are carried in language and employ discrimination *and* creative invention. Context and cultural loading are seen to be critically significant. Friel encourages, even involves, his audiences in the play's enquiry into the concepts of nation, nationality and cultural identity with their attendant ideologies *and* change. Superficially the play suggests that they are inescapable inevitabilities, but at a deeper level, it argues that addressing them is the necessary task of translation confronting each generation. Read in this way, the play is about transformation. The practice of translation, together with the metaphoric mapping survey, provides the means by which the play examines the 'somewhere' of its own inscription: the discourse, subjectivity and ideology.

*Translations* examines inevitabilities. It attempts to make sense of history through a story which, in turn, relates to tradition in at least three ways. Firstly, by creatively reinterpreting the past, this dramatic narrative releases new and hidden possibilities of understanding history. Secondly, by critically scrutinising the past, *Translations* wrests tradition away from the historic conformism, the dates and 'facts' that threaten to overpower it.<sup>37</sup> The play's refractive reflection of these re-interprets the tradition *and* the 'somewhere' from which it springs. Thirdly, and most importantly, like the recent Famine commemorations, narratives such as *Translations* (and *The Freedom of the City* and *Making History*) recuperate and remember scattered grains of history and literature, demonstrating not only the making of history but the non-fixity of things past and to come. As such, *Translations*, as its name suggests, argues for mindful and creative life — transformation. That this possibility is beset with difficulties needs little emphasis but, as the hedge-school master states, we can 'begin tomorrow.'

#### iv linguistic cartography

*Translations* demonstrates a fundamental epistemological and linguistic problem; namely that different cultures, classes and times never use language or linguistic tense-logic in the same way. Because we never ‘use words and syntax to signify exactly the same things’; interpretation or translation is perpetually necessary (Steiner 1992 45). Metaphorically *Translations* is linguistic cartography, where language, as often as silence, requires translation and re-reading in order to provide communication and understanding in the mapping of identity. These dynamics are signalled in the opening scene, where an act of self-nomination highlights the paradox of consciousness, supporting Steiner’s thesis that the surface code of language rarely matches the contours of fact or experience. Friel dramatises this ‘sender to receiver’ struggle through the dramatisation of the nineteenth century historical remapping and translation of Ireland. Audiences can see that English cartographers erase a pluralistic ontological perspective (one in which placenames carry a history and associations beyond the physical) and replace it with a positivistic mindset (one that apparently rationalises and fixes the geography) and that such actions create a powerful hunger for English and fixity.<sup>38</sup> *Translations* shows that it was not the English themselves who were the conquerors but their *language*, which deracinated the gapped and polyglot tradition of the defeated language. But neither the new language nor the native translator, Owen, completes the circle of reciprocity. Steiner comments that ‘language is far more than a currency of rational and emotional exchange. It stands in a vital, reciprocal relationship to the contours of society’ (Steiner 1967 230).

The play’s textual and philosophical reliance upon Steiner’s theoretical perspective of the colonising effect of language and translation articulated in *After Babel*, helped Friel to clarify and shape his examination of the struggle into identity through language in Ireland and Friel acknowledges this as in his programme notes (examined within Section II xi ‘Programme Notes’). Nevertheless, despite Friel’s statement (received as ingenious by some) that ‘the play has to do with language and only language’, *Translations* has attracted a polarity of critical response. Many of the gaps and silences in the text, intended to interrogate the affiliative network and discourse which frame it, have been ignored so that the play has been hailed as a ‘national classic’, ‘primarily anti-imperialist’, and as a ‘dangerous translation’, a refurbishment of the myth of the dying Gael. These polarised responses reflect more about the political ‘somewhere’ from which *they* are written, rather than about the struggle for self-definition which Friel intends. An exploration of these oppositional responses (examined later) provides a useful framework within which to conduct a reading of the play text (again)

bearing in mind Said's caution about the power of critics and how 'they embody in writing those processes and actual conditions in the present by means of which art and writing bear significance' (1983 53).

According to Steiner, the role of the translator operates, like that of critics and actors, as 'un interprète - a life-giving performer ... as intermediary and custodian [preserving works from] oblivion or distortion, [always asking] "what is the measure of man this work proposes?" [and] genuinely hop[ing] for disagreement and counterstatement' (1992 26-9). Friel's *Translations* is productive and provocative in exactly this manner. But some critics, in concentrating upon specific elements like the hedge-school, the autistic waif Sarah, the Ordnance Survey re-mapping of Ireland, and references to 'blight' and 'evictions', misinterpret the Friel's focus and make a single response where the text calls for pluralistic enquiry. As a consequence, critical bias and monological mis-focus 'contain' and domesticate the significant 'measure of man' the play proposes, appropriating and re-shaping its thesis. Ironically, this parallels Friel's claim that the cultures and identity of Ireland have been re-shaped through the introduction of the English language, and external and internal colonisation. With their exclusive prescriptions, critics echo the play's theme of re-inscription and distortion, demonstrating the destructive possibilities of language to conceal or reveal, create or distort, thereby confirming Steiner's assertion that 'only a small portion of human discourse is nakedly veracious or informative in any monovalent, unqualified sense' (1992 229). In short, the critics have reinscribed Friel's play as the culture and identity of Ireland were reinscribed. How and why the symbolic content of *Translations* has been misconstrued relates to matters of intertextuality, intralingual translation, aspects of production (such as the 1980 programme notes) and the actual performance, together with the weight of the politico-narrative tradition influencing reception and response. *Translations* is a play about language and language is political. However, critics have allowed inherited paradigms and images embedded in the poetics to shape their response to, and interpretation of, the play and its *primary implication*: the power of language in relation to identity and the tradition.

#### v written from 'somewhere'

It has been suggested that with *Translations* Friel is refurbishing a nineteenth century dream of loss, namely 'Ballybeg as a kind of Eden.'<sup>39</sup> This ignores the extent to which the play has been shaped by irony, historical borrowings such as those from Dowling's *The Hedge Schools of Ireland* and Andrews's *A Paper Landscape* and the linguistic enquiries of

Steiner's *After Babel*. This last, in particular, used verbatim in *Translations*, has greatly aided the dramatist's excavations of sacerdotal sources, which have resulted in exclusivity positions and contributed to the marginalisation of many in Ireland.<sup>40</sup> That other critics have hailed *Translations* as a national masterpiece<sup>41</sup> is equally instructive, since it ignores the multivocal dimensions which the author built into his text through his schema of names, words and language in relation to identity, as well as his borrowings from historical resources.

When critics reduce *Translations* to a 'refurbished myth' or a 'universal narrative' category, their approach is both narrow and naïve, since either prescription gives a fixed power to language that simply cannot be lent. Because language is flux, a text cannot pose as the ultimate manifestation of an epoch, nor does Friel present his work as such despite critical comments to the contrary. What is more important than any definition or interpretation of the play is to critique Friel's achievement. His declared intention was, through recuperative reflection, to open up the discourse of history to play. Ricoeur argues that the relationship between a time and its narratives requires a peculiar type of understanding since they are connected to the historical context only by transcending it. Ricoeur recognises that it is not only the surplus of signification in works and mythic paradigms which exceed their historical foundations, but also their resonance. Their power as sedimented paradigms lies in their openness to re-reading and re-invigoration since 'once they are "said", they undergo a transformation in the element of Logos, and this speech [is] able to be recaptured in terms of other historical situations' (1965 68-77, 271-286). This is precisely what Friel does with *Translations*, taking historical and cultural paradigms and re-reading them.

Friel argues that if history is presented as 'history' (fixed, certain and beyond ambiguity) then it is a lie and of little use to anyone since, as Ricoeur points out, 'history is the realm of the inexact' and that 'discovery does not discredit the historian's craft but actually justifies him.' While historians want to make past events contemporary and relevant (lessons learnt), at best, they must restore the distance and depth of historical remoteness. Such endeavours do not result from faulty methods but 'from well founded ambiguities' because history is not a universal; it is a task, like translation, 'an idea of reason' (Ricoeur 1965 76). Dependent upon language, history requires constant re-reading.

The dialogue of *Translations* illustrates the fluid nature of history. It suggests that previously Irish reality acknowledged several cultural perspectives, including Greek and Latin. This is expanded in the exchanges of Acts One and Two (between hedge-school pupils, and between Owen and Yolland) where there is a constant focus upon the history and etymology of words, names and places. But the positivistic English mindset seeks to

standardise and order that reality where previously, according to the hedge-school master, pluralism has prevailed in 'happy conjugation.' Yet Hugh's 'true myth', indicative of the delusory notions prevalent in the fictive community of Baile Beag and by inference in Ireland, is ironically undercut by the hedge-school master's repeated requests for soda bread. In reality, Baile Beag is poverty-stricken, unrealistic and exclusive, 'no longer quickened by its past',<sup>42</sup> and vulnerable because it is neither self-reflexive nor self-critical. Friel challenges audiences to interrogate past and present biases within such a community and tradition, and, by extension, to examine the language of their own culture.

Throughout *Translations*, the speech of Gaelic-speaking Baile Beag is rendered in Hiberno English and that of the cartographers in 'standard' English. But audiences are made accomplices so that the Hiberno English sometimes represents Gaelic (as when Maire speaks to Manus) and sometimes represents English itself (when Hugh and Owen talk to Yolland). The mechanism is simple and powerful. Audiences see that the Gaelic language system, which has previously offered the villagers common ground, is virtually absent from the stage. The reasons why this should be so are brought into refractory play in part by Friel's use of intertextuality. His use of Dowling, Andrews and Steiner, who share a common curiosity about language and identity, extends his deconstruction of the concept of language and culture as singular or fixed. Yet ironically, the mode of incorporation and acknowledgment of these sources (particularly in the programme notes, examined in Appendix One) may well have provoked the critical divergence referred to earlier. Sean Connolly, for example, insists that '*Translations* represents a distortion of the real nature and causes of cultural change in nineteenth century Ireland so extreme as to go beyond mere factual error ... so unrealistic and idealised as to cast doubt, not only on his history, but also on [Friel's] art.'<sup>43</sup> But as Andrews recognises, the play examines 'the relation between authority and alienation ... [so that] even in defiance of naïve historical realism [Friel creates] an extremely subtle blend of historical truth and — some other kind of truth.'<sup>44</sup>

In Ireland bifurcation has engendered an ideological recipe for permanent strife and this, I suggest, is the reality underlying much of the polarised critical response to Friel's refractory imaging (discussed in detail later). Language is political. Hence any response to this play has to be approached through an examination of the historical politics of language and the mapping of socio-political relations it proposes. 'How long can a *society* live without its tongue?' Friel asked in his dairy entry of 6th July 1979. 'The problem with the Northern situation', he remarked, 'is how you can tip-toe through the minefields of language where language has become so politicized. You see, when you have a war, language is always the



first casualty.<sup>45</sup> The comment illustrates Friel's recognition of the influence and agency of language to bring about change. It also helps elucidate why he chose the vector of the Ordnance Survey (as opposed to some 'moment' of military occupation) to telescope his examination of the influence of the English language in Ireland and the forces of change. The concept of modernity (and its ambiguities) lies at the heart of *Translations*. It is a concept similar to the nineteenth century idea of 'Progress' and produces its own condition of being: with modernity you also have tradition, backwardness and development — a whole lexicon of the political and the social that pretends to analysis when it is merely establishing its own credentials. *Translations* shows that the English language was perceived by many as the path to Progress. But such ideas cannot be separated from the concepts of identity and nation. As indicated earlier, Ireland was colonised linguistically and physically. With the move towards self-government and nationhood post-1916, the process of decolonisation began and continues to develop. Friel dramatises some of the contradictions and assumptions of all these issues in *Translations*.

#### vi towards a re-reading

In *Translations*, literary and historical traces are blended to present an image of Ireland thirty-three years after the Act of Union and roughly ten years before the Famine. *Translations* is set in a hedge school in Baile Beag, County Donegal, where pupils are prepared for interpretation of the classics and maths and, by implication, for adaptation and survival in the wider world. Baile Beag is about to be translated into English by the King's Ordnance Survey and re-educated by new National schools.

From the choice of site, a hedge school, it is clear that Friel does not underestimate the importance of education as an agency of cultural continuity or otherwise.<sup>46</sup> But the education offered in this hedge school is patchy at best and the hedge-school master, although educated, is a periodic drunkard. Hugh Mor O'Donnell is a 'brother' of Synge's Michael James Flaherty and O'Casey's Captain Boyle. In his hedge school idealised notions of unreality abound, so much so that Ferdia and Cuchulainn are presumed to live close by where, in reality, people are eking out a meagre existence. Hugh remarks, 'we like to think we endure around truths immemorially posited' (*T* 418), and audiences see that this community is an example of language at its most creative, dense with metaphor.

Acts One and Two of *Translations* show that not only has a rich and opulent language failed to equip this community for survival and economic development, but that it has burdened the community's lives with poverty and ambiguity. As a consequence, the people,

like (or because of) their fragmented education, are ill-equipped to face the pragmatism and scientific rationale implicit in the Ordnance Survey's translation of Irish placenames into English. For Baile Beag, translation comes to represent double-edged progress, epitomised by Captain Lancey, a military man beset with the 'white man's burden' of civilising the Irish. This is somewhat tempered by his assistant, George Yolland, the young orthographer, who in Baile Beag finds 'a consciousness that wasn't striving nor agitated, but at its ease and with its own conviction and assurance' (*T* 416), and who comes to recognise that translations advanced by the Survey are 'an eviction of sorts' (*T* 420).

*Translations* exemplifies the conflictual nature of nineteenth century relations between Ireland and England. The crucial question the play poses is how to transform the imposed (English) monological situation so that it can accommodate and reflect the plurality of (Gaelic) existence. Joyce described this situation as 'a dual fidelity' to opposing allegiances, a duel between the 'familiar' and the 'foreign.' Friel maintains that in Ireland there is a form of multilingualism which, if accessed, can defy compartmentalisation and exclusive hierarchies and exchange monolingualism for inter-signification. *Translations* exaggerates this process so that audiences and actors are required to supposedly understand Latin, English and Gaelic. Without exception, this linguistic conceit (that audiences are actually listening to Gaelic dialogue) has been favourably commented upon by critics. None, however, sees this imaginative practice as contributing to Friel's interrogative re-reading of the loss and suppression of the Gaelic culture. Hence, critics fail to recognise Friel's departure from the politics of exile (as exercised by Joyce) and his call for strategies (such as self-locution) capable of dealing with the prevailing socio-political and economic ambiguities. Referring to the absence and presence of Gaelic, Friel states: 'I'm not talking about the revival of the Irish language. I'm just talking about the language we have now [Hiberno English] and what use we make of it.'<sup>47</sup> In *Translations*, Hugh and his two sons, Owen and Manus, respond to this central issue posed by the play — how to deal with English — and their responses reflect on the contemporary crisis in Ireland. Manus refuses to embrace change and eventually leaves to teach in a hedge school on Inis Meadhon, his abrupt departure recalling his rash promise to Sarah that nothing could stop them. Owen, who facilitated the initial acts of translation, eventually rejects his part in the Survey. Symbolically dropping the Name-Book, he tells his father, 'It's only a catalogue of names', 'A mistake, my mistake - nothing to do with us' (*T* 444). He leaves in search of Doalty who has sworn to organise resistance to the English. But Hugh (who initially patronised the surveyors and later cursed them) waves aside Owen's apology for his part in the Survey symbolised by the Name-Book, stating: 'We must learn

those new names ... We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home' (*T* 444). Hugh's repeated use of the pronoun 'we' should leave audiences in little doubt as to Friel's intention. For Hugh maintains that 'Confusion is not an ignoble condition' (*T* 446) and cautions, 'To remember everything is a form of madness' (*T* 445). These statements culminate in Hugh's agreement with Maire Chatach to teach English and affirm the possibilities of translation. 'It's all we have', Hugh concludes (*T* 446). At its close, the play shows the O'Donnell family and the tradition they represent split apart, completely dislocated, underlining both the assumptions and ambiguities inherent in modernisation and the forces of change. Nevertheless, the 'end' underlines the vulnerability of the opening scene where Manus gently elicits words of self-identification from the autistic waif, Sarah. The ambivalence and even the use of such teaching is explored in Act One throughout which it is implied that education involves self-knowledge and strategies of self-help.

### vii characters and context

The dramatic personae in *Translations* come from but interrogate traditional types. Significantly, there is no integrative mother figure, 'larger-than-life' and 'twice as saintly', and the absence of the integrative 'Kathleen', 'Juno' or 'Nora' types used by Yeats and O'Casey points up the play's interrogative and open-ended nature. One consequence of this absence is that no female figure absorbs all the ills, by the grace of God, and thereby helps to restore 'faith' and 'fatherland.'

More importantly, the existing order, represented by Hugh Mor O'Donnell, is seen to be *decaying*.<sup>48</sup> On one level, Hugh is indeed a 'brother' of Synge's feckless fathers, Flaherty and Old Mahon, and the ineffectual Kirsanovs of Friel's *Fathers and Sons*. But as a hedge-school master he is also a symbol and symptom of Catholic marginalisation, a product of circumstances brought about by a failure in political authority. As such, this father encapsulates a central paradigm that Friel seeks to deconstruct. Like many Irish dramatic fathers, Hugh is inadequate. He may be a poet and a classical scholar, but like another Ajax, he fails to caretake the future of his community. Hugh has a distinctive taste for learning *and* liquor. Consequently, both the master and the hedge school are dramatised as historic effects; their decay, like their existence, are symptoms of specific and recurrent circumstances.

But, unlike many dramatic predecessors, and despite apparently role-playing the Irish scholar, Hugh, has no nostalgia for 'what has been lost.'<sup>49</sup> Blessed with reflexive insight, he recognises both the richness *and* the infirmity of his community, an ability largely overlooked

by many critics. What is even more fascinating is the virtual absence of critical comment upon Hugh's new book, its historical source, or its ungainly but intriguing title, 'The Pentaglot Preceptor or Elementary Institute of the English, Greek, Hebrew, Latin and Irish Languages; Particularly Calculated for the Instruction of Such Ladies and Gentlemen as may Wish to Learn without the Help of a Master' (*T* 419). This was in fact written by Patrick Lynch who was educated in a hedge school but who ran a fee-paying school.<sup>50</sup> The book and the man alike suggest that it is possible to deal with differences and inevitable change. As the title indicates, Hugh prescribes encoding and customising the English language to suit local needs. He makes no promise that the new language can or will function as an integrative, meaningful factor, bringing about a harmonious discourse. He simply says, 'I will provide you with the available words and the available grammar', which might 'help you interpret between privacies?' (*T* 446). Echoing Steiner's recognition of the pluralism of language, Hugh is wiser than his two sons.

The younger son, Owen, in part a traditional revenant figure, has been modified by contact with the outside world. For much of the play he arrogantly imagines he can dance between the two cultures (Irish and English), rationalising the rise of one and the demise of the other. His elder brother, Manus, initially functions as the father's selfless caregiver, school monitor and reverent custodian of the hedge school. Manus's lameness (caused by his father tripping over him as a child, presumably intoxicated) symbolically underlines the community's vulnerability and the need for change. Although apparently different in outlook, one progressive and modern, the other traditional and somewhat insular, neither Owen nor Manus recognises the inherent pluralism in language or their common misunderstanding about the nature of identity. By contrast, Maire Chatach is drawn more positively as one capable of self-help. She may well represent all Irish emigrants but she is also a radical departure from her beautiful 'colleen bawn' predecessors. If she is interpreted as an agent in the exercise of growing strength and awareness (and her actions warrant such a reading) then Hugh's sons can be said to eventually reflect aspects of a great harvest of Irish exiles and extremists. In common, all three young people make contact with change and their responses are various.

Jimmy Jack Cassie, by contrast, is a telling example of stasis. Ironically known as the Infant Prodigy, he is a sixty-year old pupil and contemporary of Hugh, with whom, anaesthetised by the classics and *poteen*, he swaps 'stories about Apollo and Cuchulainn and Paris and Ferdia - as if they live[d]' in the vicinity (*T* 416). Jimmy Jack represents the stultifying effect of two Irish impulses, namely, verbophilia and mythomania, the

extraordinary emphasis on the Word (with Joyce as its supreme exemplar) and upon myth (with perhaps Yeats as a chief exponent). Yet this aspect of Jimmy Jack is largely ignored by critics. At the end of the play, contemplating his imaginary marriage with Athena, he tells Hugh that all he wants is companionship, exemplifying Friel's persistent concern that reverential or referential buffoons ultimately pay a lethal price: they 'fossilize.' Harmless in himself, Jimmy Jack is no example for the younger generation; he is a moribund dreamer and, like Hugh, something of an addict of 'consoling fictions.'

By contrast, the hedge school's four younger pupils, Sarah Johnny Sally, Maire Chatach, Doalty Dan Doalty and Bridget, represent other responses to 'inevitabilities.' They are developed from traditional types in that they are commentators on the community and its hedge school as well as on the approaching translation and remapping of the district by the English. They are, however, questioning individuals with varying degrees of awareness. Sarah, in her silence, represents the inadequacy of the prevailing system while Maire Chatach represents vital enquiry. Her intelligent determination to survive is linked to a great curiosity about the world represented by the English language. Unlike Maire, Doalty, with his Puckish sense of humour, is suspicious of all that is English. But like Maire, and despite his antics, he functions as a spirit of enquiry, an aspect virtually unacknowledged by critics. This function is lucidly and ironically illustrated when Yolland tells Owen how Doalty scythed the long grass around his tent (*T* 415). This highly significant gesture is completely mis-read by the young officer. Doalty embodies the linguistic unease experienced by predecessors like Joyce's Stephen or Friel's Skinner in *The Freedom of the City*. Doalty and Skinner can be perceived as merely antic but they are formal experiments. In their respective impoverished communities, their wits have grown sharp and their humour is highly subversive. As such, their roles question prevailing inequities and age-old reductive stage-Irish stereotypes. Such inscriptions are constantly debunked by Friel. Unlike the dreamy Jimmy Jack, Doalty is not to be duped by eloquence or sentiment. If anything, he rejects the 'civilising' contact offered by the Survey, and Friel makes this explicit by having Doalty use the word 'cripes', the catchphrase of a gross, twentieth-century English public school-boy character, Billy Bunter. It repeatedly and anachronistically jars, mocks and warns that several languages are at play. Friel dramatises Steiner's comment that accent can be worn like a coat of arms and function as an instrument of ironic exclusion by colouring Captain Lancey's dialogue with imperative and condescension and giving Doalty's a mocking quality whereby he uses 'cripes' as a strategy for parody. The repeated use of a word, phrase or fragment of music has become something of a telling device in Friel's work, possibly inherited from Chekhov. Such devices

can indicate inter-signification, or the making of a consoling fiction, such as Nikolai Kirsanov's constant use of the word 'splendid' and his call for 'order' in his chaotic world, or Arkady Islayev's description of his 'astonishing' wife. But whereas these catch-phrase responses indicate emotional crises, Doalty's is more interrogative, raising questions not only about the encroaching Survey but about his own circumstances and his inability to oppose the changes he perceives. He is, like Skinner, more than a *shaughran* and as such challenges Irish and English inscriptions of this type.

Friel applies the same interrogative rigour to the character and role of George Yolland. He is unlike Doalty in at least two respects; he comes from a privileged background yet feels no loyalty towards it. Like his father, he is a soldier but it is by accident, not inclination. Yolland is a misfit in his family and country. Abroad, he is something of an innocent. He is in fact colonised and hybridised by his 'love' of Ireland, or rather, like many before him, his deluded image of it. He drinks poteen and gathers snippets of Gaelic in the process of his translating mission until his 'head's addled' (*T* 413). But Yolland, whose language and world captivate Maire Chatach, is an instrument of imperialism despite his unease about the Survey which he recognises as an 'eviction of sorts.' His abrupt and unexplained disappearance causes Lancey to threaten devastation. But bearing in mind when *Translations* was written, a time of intense military activity and sectarian assassinations, it is possible to argue that Yolland's disappearance, like the absent but frequently referenced Donnelly twins, emphasises the arbitrary nature of existence when civil codes break down.

In this context, Bridget and Doalty on stage and the truant Donnelly twins off-stage represent not only the peripheral wider community, disaffected but tied through filial piety to the land and familial obligations. Their common circumstance is the absence of self-reference and self-determination. One of Bridget's first gestures in class, apparently an isolated incident, is to consult a mirror. However, Bridget's mirror-gazing recalls earlier gestures of self-reference, such as that of Christy Mahon in Synge's Mayo *shebeen* (pub) or Friel's own Christina Mundy in *Dancing at Lughnasa*.<sup>51</sup> Within their own traditions, Bridget and Christina Mundy, like Christy Mahon, are seen to be crippled by the 'cracked looking glass of a servant.' They have to learn to do without such 'mirrors', since they allow only distorted, stereotypical reflections, otherwise the colonised viewers will remain caught forever in a posture of provincial dependence. Without strategies of self-help and, especially self-regard, the lives of such characters (like those in the Kirsanov household) ensure that there will be 'change but no change.' Friel, like Heaney in *Station Island*, uses the mirror metaphorically, emphasising that self-reference as meaning is formed through struggle and

not through any single or unified reflection. In this way *Translations* suggests that adequate representation and genuine communication between institutions and those affected involve constant struggle. Only by asserting their rights will such characters survive. Yet, by the end of the play, the future, despite some show of courage, does not look good for Bridget or Doalty. Neither education nor the political representation of these characters and their community appears equal to the task in hand: equipping these people to achieve a free and just life.

In Act One, all these characters are introduced by Owen to his English employer as 'the best people in Ireland' (*T* 405). But by Act III, the hardship which characterises their lives (symbolised by the off-stage birth and death of Nellie Ruadh's infant, the recurring truancy of the Donnelly twins and the emigrant correspondence scribed by Manus) is as *real* as the harvest blisters on Maire Chatach's hands (*T* 388) and the metonymic threat of 'the sweet smell' (*T* 394). This is no Gaelic pastoral. The level of physical and psychological deprivation endured by these people is deflected *not* by the hedge school at the centre of their lives but through the social contact and leavening humour of its shabby confines. Moreover, these incidents of humour (many of which ridicule the English) acted out by Doalty, are in fact aimed at Irish political naïveté and the habit of mirroring stereotypes. For example, Doalty's theft of the surveyor's pole is feckless, and when he offers it as a shaft for Bridget's butter churn, it becomes an item of phallic derision. Emboldened by this response, Doalty further amuses his audience, mimicking the soldiers' English as confused 'gibberish' (*T* 391). Then, in Act III, with a measure of bravado, he tells Bridget not to worry about the burning smell since it is only the burning of the soldiers' tents, and when threatened with eviction, recalls the experience of his grandfather, saying that he will not give up without a fight. But such braggadocio pales when Doalty admits that he does not know how to organise resistance. This same effect of humour as feckless resistance lies behind Skinner's jesting in *The Freedom of the City* and Maggie Mundy's riddles and jokes in *Dancing at Lughnasa*. As in these other two plays, the implication of *Translations* is that it is all very well to laugh off rules and regulations but that ultimately it is dangerous to disregard the power of 'authority.' In *Translations*, the leavening effect of biting humour is steadily inverted. Doalty amuses himself and friends by disrupting the English. But his actions do not deter the soldiers' steady measuring and renaming of the district. Assimilation proceeds and language renames these people. Antic humour proves to be no antidote against such inevitabilities.

The recurring patterns and ironies involved are doubly emphasised when Hugh uses Ovid's famous retort, '*Barbarus hic ego sum quia non intelligor ulli*' (*T* 442) in protest

against having been passed over as master of the new National school in favour of 'Master Bartley Timlin', a bacon curer from Cork whose name indicates that he is of English descent. Both the Latin and the sentiment confirm Hugh's redundancy. Like Hugh O'Neill in *Making History*, he is, at the 'end', a sadder but wiser man. He has no certain answers for his pupils (or audiences), only the bleakness of freedom from the way things were and the difference of things to come. The end of *Translations* suggests that an understanding of these characters, and ourselves, can only be accessed through an understanding of the relationship between language and its context.

The pupils' banter in Act One establishes two factors which will radically alter their lives: the linguistic re-inscription of the country by the Ordnance Survey and a National (English-medium) school system, with the alleged aim of making each pupil 'a happy English child.' Promising 'progress', such a school system will displace the hedge school system just as the Survey will efficiently rationalise place names and erase the layers of memory linked to many sites. Such changes, radical in their implications, are supported locally by the off-stage presences of Maire Chatach's mother, burdened with 'ten [children]... to be raised and no man in the house' (*T* 394), and nationally by Daniel O'Connell (*T* 400), a symbol of Catholic emancipation. Both their displacement off-stage and their representative values lend significant extension to Baile Beag's context. Neither of these absent presences can be interpreted simply as representing Catholic marginalisation. Both function interrogatively and lead us to ask why Maire Chatach's mother, like her 'sister', Lily Doherty, in *The Freedom of the City*, exists in such circumstances. Why does Friel recuperate the Liberator, Daniel O'Connell, and then qualify his value by having Doalty suggest that the politician's policies for progress amount to 'travelling around scrounging votes' and, according to Bridget, 'sleeping with married women' (*T* 399)? Perhaps these off-stage characters, like the Donnelly twins who, according to Doalty, know how to raise resistance, can be interpreted as representatives of alienation and dis-identification (*T* 442). They do not identify with or support the existing systems of government. Even off-stage, their presence dismantles aspects both of colonialism *and* of the Gaelic pastoral. Such figures of dis-identification challenge the Irish dramatic tradition, exposing Baile Beag as impoverished, and sourcing this neglect in the power and duplicity of Church and State. Again, by analogy, the fictive world reflects the contemporary, so that audiences may question the degree of political and religious freedom in their own lives.

Another symbol of dis-identification is emigration, which is seen to be as inevitable as the approach and effects of the English curriculum (*T* 394). Thus past and present, cause and



effect, are dramatically fused, revealing a world of cultural collapse. Friel's construction of the malaise affecting this dislocated community is even-handed. It is linked as much to the existing physical and mental landscape as it is to the contact and effect that the new language brings. Initially, elements of resistance appear to focus only upon the alien authority but, ultimately, this community is seen to have been disabled by its own dormant culture and its recurring paradigms (*T* 441, 442, 445). This balancing of internal and external effects, aided by Friel's intertextual borrowings, creates a manifold and layered, even ambiguous context, under-read by critics and yet exemplifying the play's central enquiry: how to revitalise the old tradition and yet take part in the process of change and universal civilisation.

This paradox is explored through key relationships: between Hugh and his sons, between Owen and Yolland, Manus and Maire, and Maire and Yolland, all of whom fail to make their thoughts and feelings clear to those closest to them. Thus the play demonstrates the complexity of communication, even among close friends, and how this, in turn, is affected by the surrounding socio-political and cultural context. Manus, for example, offers Maire help with the harvest only to be told that 'the English soldiers ... them sapper fellas, they're coming up to give us a hand. I don't know a word they're saying, nor they me; but sure that doesn't matter, does it?' (*T* 389). Here, in addition to the 'communication' between foreigners, Friel signals that non-communication exists between Maire and Manus and that this in turn is related to the wider context and his future prospects. When Manus offers his help, Maire quips, 'that's the name of a hornpipe, isn't it? — 'The Scholar In The Hayfield' (*T* 389). Whether or not this is interpreted as a genuine enquiry (and Manus signals otherwise), coming from Maire Chatach, it exemplifies the layering and ambiguity of the text (and communication) just as the title is used to debunk the Gaelic pastoral, emphasising the incongruity of a classical scholar, such as Manus, saving hay. When Maire raises the issues of emigration and marriage, they are juxtaposed against the hopelessness of Manus' prospects. He will not compete with his father for a position in the new National school. What does he propose, Maire asks, 'Teach classics to the cows? Agh - ' (*T* 404). The incomplete sentence signals her exasperation and frustration both with Manus and their lives. Manus is literally and metaphorically maimed by selflessness, serving his father and all that Hugh represents. Yet, despite the obvious tensions Manus experiences, his characterisation has not been identified by critics as an attack on pastorals and pieties.

Critics have generally interpreted Manus as a sacrificial defender and victim of the lost Gaelic culture. In *The Communication Cord* Friel specifically rejects such notions, particularly through the character of Senator Donovan, whose romanticising of cultural

victims is satirised. The play implies that inoffensive but misguided cultural victims (such as Manus, or Michael in *The Freedom of the City*) are constructions and hence just as vulnerable as the subversive jester, Doalty, or his 'brother', Skinner. Like Manus, Maire Chatach's mother is a resonant reminder of the price of unquestioning selflessness (O'Casey's stoic Juno) whereas Maire Chatach herself is a positive development from such traditional types. Thus Friel's characters and their context can be read as part of a complex ongoing process, the conflict between past and present and, by extension, the conflicting realities of contemporary Ireland.

Conflict and the implications of change are reflected in the community's circumstances, and particularly in their poverty. This is individualised in Bridget's superstitious belief about the potato blight and in Doalty's inept maths and his gestures of resistance, which suggest a limited future. Amidst this climate of failure, Maire Chatach raises a determined opposition to her companions 'looking for disaster', declaring that 'there was never blight [in Baile Beag]. Never. Never,' and chiding her companions with, 'you people aren't happy unless you're miserable and you'll not be right content until you're dead' (*T* 395). But Maire's reasoning is flawed, since 'never' is an illusion. Provocatively planted in Act One, this word will connect with her impossible desire to be 'always' with Yolland, in Act Two, and beyond to his disappearance, heralding reprisals, in Act Three.<sup>52</sup> In this space-time-narrative matrix, unquestioning lives are seen to be vulnerable and this, in turn, draws attention to the function of the hedge school and its impending displacement. While the school is a resonant symbol, its practice is obsolete; it is the decaying site and context of these characters.

The hedge school appears to be the omphalos-like heart of this community. Its master initially suggests that different conceptions of language in general have shaped the two cultural systems which now meet; English and Irish. But his teaching does not encourage his pupils to equip themselves for change. His curriculum includes Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Ovid, Tacitus and Virgil (*T* 398, 392, 393), but these revered writers are not read for their insights. Ricoeur indicates that narratives such as these, ancient searches for identity and wisdom, record cultural nuclei and map the shifting geographic and psychic boundaries of all societies. Ideally, a school is well-equipped to examine such narratives, and salient issues such as the idioms of piety and secularity. But this hedge school, with its antique curriculum, is conservative and ignores the re-inscription facing its pupils. It keeps them bound by a reverence for the past and a reluctance to embrace change, and particularly the English language. Thus the impact of education in relation to change is directly linked to the Ordnance Survey through Hugh's son, Owen.<sup>53</sup>

## viii mendacious mapping

Unifying the diversity of characters in *Translations* is the ironic absence of Gaelic and the presence of the Survey, so that absence and silence (through reinscription) abound within this play literally and metaphorically. This community is, according to Lancey, to be ‘privileged’ (T 407). Equally ironic is Owen’s statement that the Survey ‘demonstrate[s] the government’s interest in Ireland’ (T 407). This is further ironised when Yolland, asked for his comment, can only to stammer that he has ‘nothing to say - really -.’ When pressed to say ‘just a few words’, he guilelessly apologises as though for his very presence, ‘sorry - sorry’, explaining that his function is to see ‘that the place-names on this map are ... correct’ - English. The possibility of any such correctness is immediately and ironically contested when Yolland refers to Owen as Rolland (T 407). This ‘mistake’ in renaming is taken up when Manus asks Owen (and by extension all present) why the English have renamed his brother. Yolland’s renaming of Owen as ‘Roland’ (a name close to his own) exemplifies the ‘orientalising’ of the Irish as Other, as examined by Said in *Orientalism* and in his Field Day pamphlet, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature, Yeats and Decolonization*. Derry: Field Day 1988. Brushing it aside as a source of embarrassment, Owen scoffs: ‘I was afraid some of you bastards would laugh ... it’s only a name. It’s the same me, isn’t it’ (T 408). The question is rhetorical but the subsequent dialogue in Act One indicates that Owen’s homecoming has begun a mendacious re-mapping of the Irish. The impending silence recalls the translation exercise Hugh set Bridget earlier — ‘it’s easier to stamp out learning than to recall it’ (T 393) — an insight that gathers recognition in the subsequent passagework of associated names, references and affiliations.

The importance of names and identity in relation to community and location is signalled by the first Manus-Sarah exchange (T 384). It is reinforced when Owen enters, asking ‘Could anybody tell me is this where Hugh Mor O’Donnell holds his hedge school?’ (T 401), and is extended by the frequent references to the naming of Nellie Ruadh’s baby (T 397 ff). The impact of Owen’s re-entry into this community is emphasised by the stage direction that ‘as he crosses the room he touches and has a word for each person’ and his insistence that ‘nothing has changed.’ Thus the importance of belonging is established before the arrival of the English and emphasised by Doalty’s playful jibe: ‘*Jacobe, quid agis?*’ (T 401).<sup>54</sup> As the Act proceeds, however, audiences see that in this community belonging amounts to the ties that bind people not only together and to their land but also to hardship.<sup>55</sup> This is deliberate, serving to point up the price of being dis-membered, and is reiterated in the closing minutes of the play when Jimmy Jack asks: ‘Do you know the Greek word *endogamein*? It means to

marry within the tribe. And the word *exogamein* means to marry outside the tribe.’ He concludes (again), ‘you don’t cross those borders casually - both sides get very angry’ (*T* 446).<sup>56</sup>

In *Translations*, between Owen’s homecoming and Jimmy’s caution about ‘borders’, the power of language in relation to identity and self-location is increasingly brought into focus as this community is re-named and dismembered, physically and psychologically. But by weaving a play of facts *and* ambiguities, Friel avoids writing a description for resistance. Rather, he shows aspects of change and colonisation are carried in and through *language*.

*Translations* emphasises that language literally affects time, place and identity. Owen is a central agent and Friel places him at the heart of a homecoming motif, juxtaposing this with his mendacious mappings. Owen virtually un-names himself (*T* 408) and then begins to spread this malaise officially with Yolland, from within the hedge school at the beginning of Act Two (*T* 409+), aided by the poteen of *Anna na mBreag* — literally a source of lies (*T* 417). Just as Anna is an appropriate muse, so the brew is an appropriate metaphor for the circumstances involved in translating and transforming Gaelic Ireland into Anglicised Ireland. *Poteen* in this play is synonymous with self-delusion and poverty but placed in its historical context, it highlights the consequences of the insurrection of 1789 which resulted in the Act of Union in 1800, Britain’s retaliation for Irish effrontery and insubordination. In this era, in order to pay rent to the landlord and the tithe to the parson, many farmers turned to distilling *poithim*. Consequently, *poteen* is symbolic of these circumstances and not just illicit alcohol. Critics have ignored this and the fact that Friel recuperates and places the rebellion in the past-tense at the end of the play.

An intoxicated Owen imagines he is an agent of change. In fact, it is language, and not the English themselves, that effects the betrayal and colonisation, something which Owen belatedly perceives in Act Three (*T* 430). Only then does he grasp what his father already knows, namely, that memory and language are both individual and cultural, ‘full of mythologies of fantasy and hope and self-deception’ (*T* 418-19).<sup>57</sup>

The re-mapping of Act Two focuses upon one of the play’s central concerns, the paradoxical aspects of communication, understanding and modernisation. The play invites audiences to reflect upon and deal with the absent Gaelic tradition but prompts them to transcend the pressure of what is absent. Act Two’s passagework of names, places and relationships shows that language can either enlarge the circle of communication *or* incarcerate. Audiences are required to probe the circumstances and world of these characters, local and other, representative in so far as they stimulate reflection but not facilely

stereotypical. Their world appears multi-layered so that no single response to a name or incident is definitive or adequate. This is the difference between the Gaelic perspective (multiple and gapped) and the Positivist-type English perspective represented by the Ordnance Survey and the new language.

Some critics have interpreted this layering as a defect of prolixity and 'stage-Irishness.' But this ignores the philosophical implications of the play and Friel's ironic undercutting of verbophilia and mythomania. The layering is, in fact, part of Friel's storytelling vocabulary, demonstrating the pluralistic mindset at play and relating this to the plurality of existence. In the opening scenes, for example, the dialogue reflects a tradition characterised by an accumulation of associations and attitudes and exemplified by nomination codes, by Jimmy Jack's mythic tales and by Hugh's boasts of the opulence of the native syntax. But much of this rich linguistic cartography is contradicted by the meagre existence of these characters, especially Sarah. Their consoling fictions are repeatedly undercut by facts such as emigration and a diet of potatoes and soda bread. Recurrently invoked, these references take on symbolic resonance, revealing a desperate manipulation of facts and a need for change. Constant use of inference and irony marks this as a play of dis-identification with Gaelic pastoral notions and points to storytelling as a specific recuperative strategy.

Ricoeur claims that 'we tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated', and that this is especially true of 'the history of the defeated and the lost' since their 'suffering cries out ... and calls for narrative' (Ricoeur Vol I 1984-88 75). Understood in this way, as a universal need to make sense of history through story, narrative can revitalise tradition, creatively reinterpreting the past and releasing hitherto concealed possibilities of understanding.

*Translations* involves audiences in such a storytelling strategy; through inference and irony they are encouraged to re-read as self-delusion Hugh's suggestion that 'our own culture and the classical tongues [make] a happier conjugation' than English can facilitate. Indeed Hugh is seen to be as semantically ingenious and creative as Lancey. Hugh's recollection of his initial encounter with Lancey, for example, clearly reveals that horses and equipment have been stolen by locals and have not 'strayed' or been 'mis-laid.' At this point Hugh's characterisation totters on the edge of stage-Irishism. But his lack of honesty is matched by Lancey's lies (*T* 406-7) so that both dispositions illustrate how and why Baile Beag faces cultural collapse. This mendacious mapping of Baile Beag, external and internal, is compounded by Lancey's demands, by Owen's deliberate mis-translation of them and by Hugh's intoxicated verbal response, offering the agents of change 'friendship, ... hospitality,

and every assistance' (*T* 407/8). By the end of Act One, three different perspectives are being advanced; (Lancey's, Owen's and Hugh's) not just three angles of perception but three moments of disjunction. This is emphasised by Manus' assertion that 'there's nothing uncertain about [the situation,] it's a bloody military operation' (*T* 408). Thus, from the opening Manus-Sarah naming scene to the closing note of traduction, language manipulates circumstances. Language is power.

Undoubtedly echoes of 'the white man's burden' colour Lancey's speech (*T* 405-07). This is diluted in translation by Owen (*T* 406), revealing his disposition and the wider native-foreign dynamics afoot to Manus and audiences. This irony underlines the intrusive and extractive and non-restorative aspects of inadequate translations but it also emphasises the hermeneutics of language, engaging actors and audiences alike. Thus Friel uses irony to encourage scepticism and demonstrate that communication can be double-speak and even betrayal. Language and meaning are revealed as shifting surfaces conveying or deflecting symbolic content. In Baile Beag ignorance and superstition leave many vulnerable. Bridget, for example, believes that the 'sweet smell' of blight snakes in and causes the crops to rot (*T* 396) and Sarah is told by Manus that *language* will *liberate* her (*T* 384). In practice, however, and particularly with the arrival of the English (*T* 404), language is seen to control social relations and to conceal more than it reveals. Dishonest acts of translation characterise Act One and foreshadow the delusion and betrayal in the subsequent two Acts. In Act Two, using Steiner's linguistic mapping metaphor almost verbatim, Hugh tells Yolland that 'words are signals, counters ... not immortal. And it can happen ... that a civilisation can be imprisoned in a linguistic contour which no longer matches the landscape of ... fact' (*T* 419; Steiner 1992 22). Hugh is describing a cultural paralysis and the linguistic mendacity of elders such as himself and Jimmy Jack. His statement is not, however, simply an admission of inadequate education. The inference is that the mother tongue no longer provides this community with adequate skills for self-location. Baile Beag, as Hugh recognises, is 'imprisoned' in language. And while audiences perhaps recognise that the language concerned is Gaelic, the surrounding dynamics show that in order to accommodate experience and remain vital, all language must change.

Had Friel left the thematics of native and foreign, and of translation and code changing at a literal level — the Irish being reinscribed — the play could legitimately be construed as 'a dirge for the dead Gael', condemning the old enemy, England. At the end of Act One, however, the continued survival of the community is signalled as improbable not only because of Lancey, his surveyors and their mission, but also because of the community's

inability to grapple with the advancing tide of modernisation. This is epitomised by the conflict between Hugh and his sons, and Doalty's ill-devised resistance. In short, ignorance, poverty and emigration erode.

Emphasising the internal and external aspects of change, Friel establishes a complementarity between Owen and Yolland, encapsulated in Owen's persistent use of the pronoun 'we.' Together they begin the translation work, focusing upon Bun na hAbhann (*T* 410). At this point, the name is simply a Gaelic speech-sound. Later, when Bun na hAbhann, Sarah's home, is threatened with razing, she falls silent so that her entry into speech, like the name of her village, echoes as little more than a memory of a speech-sound. Initially Yolland suggests that 'there's no English equivalent for a sound like [Bun na hAbhann].' And in fact, there is no official Gaelic agreement: the church Register has it as 'Banowen, the parish Freeholders registry as 'Owenmore' and the jury lists call it 'Binhone' (*T* 410) so that Owen and Yolland agree to call it 'Burnfoot.' This bears neither a linguistic nor a physical likeness to the original but, ironically, it predicts the future of Sarah's village. This single incident of nomination becomes symptomatic of subsequent conflicts in Act Two, which culminate in the disarray of Act Three. Similarly, the Tobair Vree re-naming exercise demonstrates how the caretakers of the native tradition have layered the folk memory. Rivers like the Boyne, the Somme and the Thames record much more than geography. Perhaps this is why Spenser, among others, suggested, 'Change the language and you change the people.'

The Gaelic name Bun na hAbhann, like that of Tobair Vree, allows several descriptions of the same place. When translated by Owen and Yolland, only a single description is allowed and, as audiences see, even when names are related to the geography of a place (i.e. the mouth of the river) the translation (river foot) is an expedient and a poor reproduction of the original. Thus, the new language overlies and dislocates the old. Equally, these young agents of change are, in themselves, somewhat dislocated.

Biographical information to this effect is woven throughout their re-naming work, emphasising how their personal histories and pieties colour their efforts and showing that they are instruments and not agents of change.<sup>58</sup> When eventually Yolland says that he is 'concerned' about his efforts (*T* 419), Owen overrides him with 'we're standardizing those names as accurately and as sensitively as we can' (*T* 420). But what becomes clear is that their translations entirely alter and domesticate the original.<sup>59</sup> Such dubious benefits are subtly underlined by Yolland's naive offer to share 'a crate of oranges from Dublin' (*T* 412). The inference is that oranges are little more than exotic, imperial booty. Thus the colonising and syncretic impact of language and the cartographic re-naming which begins in Scene One,

Act Two, gathers force. It links back to the personal self-locution passagework between Manus and Sarah in the first scene and proleptically signals the impending geographic and psychological dislocation of this community.

In the same manner, the expedient translations of Act Two link back to and echo Owen's inadequate translations in Act One. There, Owen stated that 'uncertainty in meaning is incipient poetry' (*T* 408), yet his actions in Act Two refute this.<sup>60</sup> His own personal ambivalence is signalled when he comments, 'who said that?'<sup>61</sup> In Act Two Owen compounds his convolutions of Act One and bristles with abstract notions of order and standardisation. But his lack of reciprocity and honesty in Acts One and Two rebounds upon him in Act Three and is encapsulated in Hugh's comment that 'confusion is not an ignoble condition' (*T* 446). These two statements invoking Steiner, about uncertainty and confusion (*T* 408 and 446), together with the re-naming of Tobair Vree (*T* 420), combine to illustrate the problems besetting a tradition moving beyond its first naïveté.

Ricoeur considers that 'the past, cut off from the dialectic between future, past and present remains an abstraction' and that interpretation and understanding can only be approached through dialectic re-reading of the narratives of history and literature since 'both, by different paths, aim at consistency and at correspondence' in representing the past (Ricoeur 1984 51; 36). Viewed from this perspective, the Bun na hAbhann and Tobair Vree re-naming episodes concentrate the play's enquiry into the past and its impact upon the present. These renamings show that language is full of latent and realised pressures but they also elucidate the truism that all languages cast us as either foreign or familiar. Unlike Owen, Yolland perceives that the private core (inherent in all language) will remain hermetic. Momentarily, Owen is disconcerted by the recognition that his translations can be used to map out either divisions or connections (*T* 420). Hence it is the young foreigner who first recognises the complexity of translation, a process which Steiner sums up as trust, extractive incursion, incorporation and restorative interpretation.<sup>62</sup> Audiences see that it is Owen, the native, who receives but betrays the trust of his community. As translator he extracts and re-names without any reciprocity, so that Yolland sees their work as 'an eviction of sorts ... Something is being eroded' (*T* 420). And when Manus accuses Yolland of being a 'colonist', Owen refutes this with, 'He's a decent man' (*T* 422), a statement that reflects a degree of insight into his own personal and professional shortcomings.

Owen's actions (like those of Friel's young nihilist Bazarov) have an edge of youthful arrogance and erotic possession. Despite his brother's attachment to Maire, Owen introduces her to Yolland, not so much as an individual but as a form of seductive Otherness. Maire, in



turn, is seduced by the Otherness of the English language and the opportunities it promises. Owen thinks he can play ‘creator’ but in his ignorance, he is seduced by the English language. Enamoured of it, Owen is its instrument, importing new, fixed meanings to overlay the native plurality. He may provide the new vocabulary, but in doing so reveals his own lack of understanding of the power of language, as well as of the necessary reciprocity between the foreign and the familiar tongue. The issue is not, as he imagines, simply a matter of erasing ‘incipient poetry’ (*T* 408) and creating a standardised ‘catalogue of names’ (*T* 444). The central issue is the recognition that all translations are incursive and extractive and that this can only be countered through reciprocity and restitution within the translation act. When Owen finally realises the hostility of his activities — ‘a mistake - my mistake’ (*T* 444) — it is too late. He is obliged to re-translate and restore the placenames in order to identify them as targets for reprisals and destruction (*T* 440). Thus Owen’s translations are seen as incapable of protecting the cultural nuclei from oblivion and obscurity, the function commonly defined as the task of the translator. And in this way the play’s characteristic principle of incongruity between reality and delusion, the clash between things as they are and as they are believed to be, or could be, is brought to the forefront. What *Translations* dramatises is not only the loss of illusions but also, more importantly, how difficult is the process of communication and understanding. In this regard, Owen is the play’s agent (translator and betrayer) and the lackey of language.

Owen is not alone, however, in his alienation and seduction by language. Yolland is equally intoxicated and dislocated with his notions of native-primitive Celtica. This is reminiscent of both the nineteenth-century Revivalist ethos and earlier romanticisations of the assimilation of ‘Old English’ into native society in Tudor times. That his illusion of the native past is an impossible nostalgia is signalled when he twice calls Baile Beag ‘Eden’ — not simply a paradise lost but something irredeemable (*T* 422; 425). Friel politicises this comparison by juxtaposing Eden, Baile Beag and Bombay, another colonial jewel. As a consequence of these associative references, it becomes clear that the central influence in this whole translation business, concentrated in this Act Two, Scene One, is appropriative and colonialist, and that Owen and Yolland are simply lackeys.

Colonisation is epitomised by the comparison and contrasts drawn between characters such as Owen and Yolland and places such as Baile Beag and Bombay and, similarly, between the orders of Lancey and London and the myths of Jimmy Jack and Hugh. Ultimately, the various colonialist and nationalist categorisations dissolve when these various voices are perceived and understood as foreign and familiar echoes of the larger appropriative

power — language. In this way, foreign and familiar characters function like the disorderly unconscious, but, using multiple perspectives, irony and inference, Friel forges them as associative links and echoes in a communicative chain that implements change and concealment through linguistic strategies. Lancey and Yolland are facets of the same metropolitan epitomised by ‘London.’ And while Hugh and Jimmy Jack are marginalised figures, they are also part of a counter-determining, mythologising form of politics with the hedge school pupils as their sphere of influence. Operating between the metropolitan and the marginalised, Owen, as the ‘agent’ of language and change, is not content with a neutral, transformative translation but uses short-cut strategies to evict the prevailing Irish identity. When exposed to scrutiny, his translations are revealed as betrayal, rudimentary elements in an ironic play of lies: a fact that has been largely overlooked by critics. Owen would be a brother to Yolland and betray his own. Why?

In many respects, Owen is a traditional Judas-figure, a product of extremes well-known in the Irish tradition. But in Friel’s theatre he is, more importantly, an example of ‘everyman’ arrogance and imagined dominance over language. Owen betrays because he fails to recognise the need for a translation dialectic of trust, of reciprocal enhancement, linguistic and moral. This is, as Steiner indicates, completed with ‘the inner mechanism of compensation, the offertory turn of the translator towards the original which he ha[s] penetrated, appropriated and left behind’ (1992 416). Owen works incursively and extractively to formalise and incorporate the Irish into another order and dispossesses the mother tongue, without recompensing it with a persistent and geographical-cultural survival. The reasons for Owen’s inadequate translation are many. But if they are listed as youthful ignorance and haste, personal limitations and ambition, the question arises to what extent his past and his contact with the English have contributed to this. By provoking such questions, the play reinforces its enquiry into the power of language and notions of progress.

Owen is naïve, claiming that Yolland’s description of Baile Beag as Eden is ‘right’, that they ‘name a thing and — bang — it leaps into existence’ and that each re-naming is ‘a perfect congruence with its reality ... each name a perfect equation with its roots’ (*T* 422). He is, in some respects, a Bazarov, intent upon making everything afresh while deliberately ignoring the connections between the past and the present realities he seeks to erase; realities which, as Pavel Kirsanov notes, effect ‘change but no change.’ Owen’s perspective is aggressively Positivist-like and diagrammatic. Like Bazarov’s, it denies the possibilities of inevitable change inherent in any map — geographic, cultural or psychological and proposes a fixed solution.

To adopt such a perspective is to divorce culture and language. Viewed in this way, Owen's translations are expedient but reductive. Act Two brings this 'creation' mapping metaphor into full focus, demonstrating the ethical and moral dimensions of all translation and may well have provided Martin Esslin and Seamus Heaney with the ground for their claims that the play strikes an anti-imperialist position. Moreover, the dispossession effected in this scene appears to be compounded by Manus's announcement that he intends leaving Baile Beag to teach in a hedge school on *Inis Meadhon*. But, Manus's departure to *Inis Meadhon* (literally and metaphorically an isolated island outcrop) is protest against the old as much as against the new. It is an indictment against all that 'romance' about 'enduring around truths immemorially posited' (*T* 418) and the hardship in Baile Beag and the encroaching linguistic re-inscription. It is one thing to announce a 'thousand baptisms' (*T* 422) but the baptism (*T* 391), death (*T* 438) and funeral of Nellie Ruadh's baby (*T* 446) undercut such Edenic abstractions. Coupled with the un-naming and re-naming of Bun na hAbhann, and followed by Lancey's threat of evictions and razings, such incidents typify the ironic deconstruction of oppositions embedded in the passagework of *Translations* where words, images and gestures interrogate one another and recall Steiner's comment that words are echo chambers of history and feeling and meaning. Thus the 'creation' renaming scene points up the contradictions inherent in the old life but also in modernisation. (See Appendix Two which offers a mapping of these).

And while Owen's Name Book substitutes are inadequate, (again) it is Hugh that tells him, 'we must learn those new names. We must learn where we live. We must learn to make them our own. We must make them our new home' (*T* 445). The anaphora is simple but effective, and despite his son's protests, Hugh presses home his insight about the forces that shape identity - 'images of the past embodied in language' — insisting, 'we must never cease renewing those images; because once we do, we fossilize' (*T* 445).<sup>63</sup>

This is Friel's clearest enunciation of the need for self-location and the necessity for an authentic understanding of the making of history and of cultures. Carried in language, neither history nor culture can be complete or definitive since, as *Translations* shows, dogmatic opposition between them impedes understanding and disallows differences.

If Acts One and Two illustrate the need for history and culture to be an ongoing system of discriminations and evaluations, vitalised by differences, Act Three demonstrates the dire consequences of neglecting this. It shows how cultural fidelity to *images* of the ancestral past is not necessarily reducible to the facts of that past. The so-called 'facts' of the past, told and retold open up a play of difference — the distance that separates perspectives — and attempts

to locate events in some sort of order and reality. Speaking about the play and *Field Day*, Friel insisted that their aim was 'to forge an analytical new model ... not inhibited by the stereotypes of the past.'<sup>64</sup>

The Maire-Manus-Yolland triangle is a case in point. Generally, it has been interpreted as a stereotypical love triangle. And while it can be read as a cultural and historical mismatch, it is more germane to the play's thesis of the mapping of identity as the personal struggle of being and becoming and the forces modernity. This is the struggle that confronts the young in relation to the weight of familial and traditional obligations and the power structures that inscribe them. Consequently, the central tension between the personal and the ideological is under-read when critics focus upon what appear to be simply romantic elements. More salient, for example, is to ask why Manus is unable to distance himself from his role as caregiver to his father and contest the national school teaching post (*T* 394); to ask, as Yolland does, why Manus is always trying to protect his father, and why Manus's desire to be with Maire is sacrificed to familial piety and a cultural loyalty bound up with a derelict hedge school.

*Translations* answers such questioning, showing that the struggle into existence, not love, is the common plight of Manus and Yolland. Both are dominated by language and by their fathers, and it is significant, but not surprising, that ultimately neither Manus nor Yolland manages to determine his own needs. Their lives are dominated by a sense of obligation to their different traditions and, as a consequence, neither secures a life with Maire and the departure she represents. Rather than a romantic triangle, the conflict involving these three characters is the crisis of modernity, the erosion of traditional values implicit in the material transformation of nineteenth century social structures.

On an individual level, a weight of tradition and family obligation binds characters such as Manus to images of the past and to his father rather than to a possible future with Maire. On a mytho-poetic level, Yolland is observed to be in love not so much with Maire Chatach as with all that this 'colleen bawn' symbolises. He is, indeed, in love with the idea of Ireland which Friel seeks to interrogate. Similarly, Maire is enamoured of the world which Yolland represents. This becomes clear in Act Three Scene Two, when she traces Yolland's home, 'a tiny wee place', ironically named 'Winfarthing', close to other villages whose names demonstrate an earlier colonisation: 'Winfarthing — Barton Bendish — Saxingham Nethergate — Little Walsingham — Norwich — Norfolk' (*T* 437-8). Again, the metaphor of mapping is employed to demonstrate not just the winds of change but the fluid re-alignments of the individual and ongoing mapping of self.

That Maire (like Gareth O'Donnell) typifies all Irish emigrants is made clear in her exchange with Owen in Act Three, Scene Two. Referring to Sarah's new green dress from Boston, she says: 'I hope to God there's no hay to be saved in Brooklyn' (*T* 438). The names of the new world, like those in Jimmy Jack's ancient world, appear as familiar as if they were, literally, in 'the next parish', but with a difference. This phrase refers to the various cities of the new world to which Irish family members emigrated. Maire can discriminate between her own decaying community and the possibilities of Brooklyn. Nevertheless, emigration is not offered as an uncomplicated escape. It is an undertaking beset with potential danger and this is indicated textually by placing Maire's apprehensions about Brooklyn alongside her concern over the absence of Yolland. Danger appears to be inherent in any departure beyond that which is local and familiar. Thus, the Maire-Owen conversation moves from mapping and self-reference to her enquiries after Yolland and then to a whole list of preoccupations: her unattended geography homework, children to be washed and put to bed, and the black calf to be fed. The bleakness of her existence is summed up in her concluding observation that Nellie Ruadh's baby 'didn't last long' (*T* 438). This conversation has the apparent 'tumble and dispersion' of speech but it records a network of affiliation and hardship, with its vocabulary drawing audiences to investigate images of emigration and poverty. The play asks *why* such impoverished circumstances persist but offers no clear views on the issue. Instead, it indicates that the power relations carried in language govern characters and their circumstances. In this sense the play is literally three Acts of language and power relations within which Maire's is a voice promoting change. But if Maire speaks for change, she is nonetheless a product of dire circumstances, desperate to escape the snares of poverty and provincialism.<sup>65</sup> Because of this reality Manus, Maire and Yolland cannot be interpreted as symbolic ill-fated lovers in a Gaelic pastoral. They challenge this stereotype, functioning as literary reflections of the struggle into communication and highlighting the alienation inherent in language. Using the realities of class and poverty and the complexities of communication, Friel dismantles more than the myth of Ireland's pastoral plenitude.

Critics responding to *Translations* have repeatedly fastened upon Maire and Yolland as Friel's central statement that intimate communication between their two cultures is, by its nature and history, flawed and improbable.<sup>66</sup> Such an approach ignores *Translations*'s larger context of the non-accommodation and colonisation inherent in language. This is signalled at the outset in the Manus and Sarah exchange, where the teacher promises 'Nothing'll stop us now!' (*T* 353), and culminates in the tragic failure of communication and understanding between him and Sarah with a repetition of the same phrase (*T* 433).<sup>67</sup> Their non-connection

(much more than that between Maire and Yolland) demonstrates once again Friel's assertion that the coloniser is the language, and not the English themselves. From the outset, language is seen to inscribe roles and place constraints and a semblance of order on the plurality of existence. In this sense, *Translations* maps out the crisis that befalls any individual or community where a monological perspective is privileged as the major means of communication, since by its nature, language is observed to be layered in meaning and burdened by historic and other cultural baggage.

There is nothing original in this. At the beginning of the century, Synge demonstrated the power of the lie with his anti-pastoral, *The Playboy of the Western World*. Later, O'Casey brought the plight of the urban to the forefront with his teeming Dublin tenements and exposed the rhetoric of nationalist blood sacrifice. The tyranny of the ties that bind the individual and the provincial community to the land and mindless hardship became the recurring themes of Patrick Kavanagh, Eugene McCabe and John B. Keane. What separates Friel from them is his direct confrontation of the lie of language, the unitary self and Irish notions of self. *Translations* interrogates and dismantles the 'somewhere' of its own inscription — the Gaelic pastoral, and the acceptance or sentimentalising of defeat, failure and violence. By interrogating the construction of exclusive codes of identity, it implicitly explores the making of oppositions, such as Nationalism and Unionism, rejecting both since neither celebrates difference. *Translations* is a negative critique of all such nationalism and mythologies — the mystique of the Irish, the Irish sense of unreality, the oppressive lie of Irish eloquence — revealing the cold face of poverty and provincialism.<sup>68</sup>

By undercutting the established paradigms of history and literature, Friel's play refutes definitive interpretation, insisting that communication and understanding are open to perpetual re-interpretation. Obviously, interpretation of a text becomes more complex when an author employs intertextuality (a point returned to later). In such circumstances, as Ricoeur suggests, appropriation of the meaning of a text becomes as paradoxical as that of the authorship. What Ricoeur recognises is that just as multiple and specific experiences may influence the writing, so, similarly, specific aspects may condition response. This potential was alluded to in the 1983 Maynooth Seminar by Kevin Barry, who acknowledged this stalemate and suggested that this was the productive power of the play in performance. In this seminar Friel indicated rather than offering a prescriptive corrective, that *Translations* re-creates history, with actors and spectators participating in the creative process and interpretation. Barry commented that in performance the inter-textual collision of Friel's work and sources such as Andrews's *Paper Landscape* become interrogatively

complementary because they are written from different sites, and concluded that the dramatic collision in *Translations* epitomises the larger interpretative struggle between the narratives of history and literature.

### ix critics' response<sup>69</sup>

At its première, *Translations* was hailed as a national classic, a modern tragic masterpiece<sup>70</sup> and as 'a dangerous translation', <sup>71</sup> 'shor[ing] up a dangerous myth', <sup>72</sup> and, subsequently as 'a mythic landscape of beauty and plenitude', <sup>73</sup> 'a hopelessly idealised' world. <sup>74</sup> Ironically such conclusions reveal more about critics' own oppositional stances and allegiances than about the play. As Barry suggests, no matter how variously *Translations* was understood in London, Derry or Galway, it was reviewed as 'a national *classic* [and] such reviews stop plays being playful' [my emphasis]. <sup>75</sup>

These <sup>76</sup> and subsequent <sup>77</sup> responses to the play, largely accepting it as representing an intelligible and shared history, indicate that Friel's anti-realist strategies (such as character role playing, programme notes and spectator engagement) and his anti-national stereotypes (such as Doalty, Jimmy Jack Cassie and Hugh), were not wholly successful. Colm Cronin, for example, saw the theme of *Translations* as 'the rape of the local culture by the imported one ... the bastardisation of a heritage that stretched back to mythology.' Cronin concluded that 'the new schools and the new topography crowned the efforts of the Empire to kill off for all time both the language and the landmarks of the country.' <sup>78</sup> In saying this, Cronin implies that Friel is refurbishing threadbare, even illusory myths about dispossession. John Jordan remarked that the play dramatised dispossession so that 'whatever one has of racial consciousness is touched to the quick.' <sup>79</sup> Similarly, Frank McGinley asserted that the Ordnance Survey and the National school system had 'signalled the beginning of the final attack on the Irish nation' and commented that, 'despite his reading of history', the play had 'confronted' him with an Ireland he 'had not realised existed.' <sup>80</sup>

McGinley was not alone in failing to recognise the thesis and challenge signposted in the play's title. An Irish language review in the *Irish Times* ventured that the play recalled that 'terrible period of Irish history when official and institutional consolidation was made on the decline of our language and culture and another language and culture were to be put in their place henceforth.' <sup>81</sup> Desmond Rushe, somewhat like McGinley, asserted that the play was 'an astonishing evocation of a time when the flashing-eyed Athene of Grecian saga was as familiar to Donegal peasants as the Grainne of Irish legend', <sup>82</sup> totally ignoring the irony of Jimmy Jack Cassie and his proposed marriage to Athene. He is not a left-over, Arnoldian

‘child-like’ erudite Celt, quite the reverse. In his sixties, he remains (at school) an addled and deeply alienated drunk preaching against exogamy but intent upon marriage to Pallas Athene — a ‘lady’ little different to ‘Britannia.’ No critic grasped this particular nettle of imperial echo nor related Friel’s metaphor to the dynamics of sectarianism, an obvious extension. Even less circumspect, Gus Smith echoed Cronin and McGinley in concluding that the interface between Ireland and England had ‘been disastrous for us socially, culturally and politically.’<sup>83</sup> All these critics have taken up the language issue but interpreted translation as elimination, placing the blame squarely with the English and accepting no part in the process. Equally partial in her reading, Martha McClelland stated that the drama ‘deals powerfully with a number of themes of particular interest to Republicans’ and, singling out Doalty and his ‘resistance’ as the hero of the piece, announced that ‘*Translations* needs no translation in the occupied six counties’ and generally suggesting that it was a matter of ‘Brits out.’<sup>84</sup> Cronin, Jordan, McGinley, Rushe, Smith and McClelland, and to a lesser extent Betty Lowry<sup>85</sup> and Judith Rosenfield,<sup>86</sup> thus interpreted *Translations* in terms of history rather than drama, totally ignoring its ironic play of ambiguity and its appeal for accommodation and self-location through translations.

Seamus Heaney did not interpret *Translations* as history, but rather began his review by recuperating Stephen’s fretful meditation on ‘his [dean’s] language’, lines which resonate long after as tantamount to a momentary indulgence in the dispossession myth. Heaney quickly presses on to establish that *Translations* offers no such indulgence. Rather, he indicates, it is a play of ‘dispossessed/abandonment, uncertainty’, a phrase he repeats. Friel, he states, recognises ‘that there were certain inadequacies within the original culture that unfitted it to survive the impact of the English presence and domination.’ As a consequence of dealing with these uncertainties, ‘the play’, Heaney insists, ‘is not simply a historical entertainment’ and adds that, ‘the betrayer is betrayed.’<sup>87</sup> And while Heaney focuses upon Owen and his part in the whole process, he finds in Sarah an *aisling*, ‘struck dumb [as though] by the shock of modernity.’ Heaney’s perception of Sarah’s possible symbolic resonance and the wider context of modernity are insights not shared by many critics. ‘Friel’s work’, he expands, ‘not just here but in his fourteen preceding plays, constitutes a powerful therapy, a set of imaginative exercises that give [Ireland] the chance to know and say herself properly to herself again.’ This comment, albeit brief, offers, without prescription, a context for *Translations* and relates it to Friel’s wider body of enquiry. Heaney also states that the work of Friel confronts us ‘from different angles but with a constant personal urgency upon the need we have to create enabling myths of ourselves and the danger we run if we too



credulously trust to the sufficiency of these myths.' Self-delusion, Heaney suggests, is fatal. Almost alone among Irish critics, Heaney touches base in the driving appeal of the play, — 'to create enabling myths of ourselves.'

Consideration of the English<sup>88</sup> and Irish<sup>89</sup> critical responses, although not exhaustive, is useful in that it reveals interpretative divergences and proffers some possible reasons for this. It also confirms that the facts of history in Ireland have become clouded even though their presence is still real. That many critics have accepted drama (*Translations*) as history is the most obvious and pertinent indictment of their criticism, more evident among Southern Irish critics than others. It is also worth noting that critical response in London was generally marked by an absence of ideological over-determining and largely responsive to the play of differences, even at times bordering on an Arnoldian appreciation of the play's evocations. Yet in both the English and combined Irish reviews there was a lack of informed comment on the subject, themes and characters and a recycling of enthusiastic generalities. Doalty's anachronistic 'cripes', for example, does not appear to have raised a comment, whereas his fragmentary 'resistance' speech was used by one critic as the basis of an anti-British diatribe.<sup>90</sup> And this selective 'seeing' was common among Irish critics, several of whom failed to recognise Friel's use of irony, particularly to highlight incongruities. In addition, neither the set nor its significance or design, or the closely related lighting plot, received much attention whereas the players themselves were generally hailed as exceptionally talented and excellently cast.

The selection of early Irish popular reviews is indicative of the mis-readings that have plagued *Translations* ever since. Hence the play has been awarded pieties which Friel himself states he never intended. Perhaps influenced by such 'sited' responses, the Irish-American Cultural Institute awarded Friel a prize for the play, which, according to their press release, spoke for 'the divers peoples of this planet who are suffering a rape of their traditions.' However, if bias along sectarian lines was evident among popular critics, it was also evident among some academics.

Five years after the play's appearance, and in a climate marked by revision, Edna Longley argued that *Translations* presents 'a mythic landscape of beauty and plenitude that is pre-Partition, pre-Civil War, pre-famine, pre-plantation and pre-Tudor.' For Longley, neither Friel nor Field Day has left aside the 'legacies of the old enemy' and entered the revisionist climate.<sup>91</sup> Referring specifically to *Translations*, Longley asserts that the play repeats rather than examines the 'myths of dispossession and oppression', adding that although Friel 'translates contemporary Northern Catholic feeling into historical terms ... very well ... the

play is partly “fossilised” because he explores the ethos of a particular community exclusively in relation to British dominion over the native Irish.’ Thus perceptions of a political subtext and an ‘exclusive’ rather than representative community dominate Longley’s response and disallow any recognition of the repeated, ironic undercutting of notions of essence (of any colour) and the constant analogy invited between old and new modes of self-definition, examined through Manus, Owen and Hugh which in turn relate to many other such inadequate or dysfunctional fathers and son/s relationships in, for example, *Philadelphia*, *Here I Come!*, *The Gentle Island*, *Aristocrats* and Friel’s version of Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*.

Several years later, Brian McAvera commented that he still found the play ‘deeply worrying’, sensing that ‘traditionalist nationalist myths were being given credence.’ McAvera’s prefaces his comments with a declaration of his religious and educational background and stating that he would ‘like th[e] article to be viewed within those contexts’; he proceeds to use a quote from Heaney out of context and ultimately concludes that ‘Friel’s work is directly political in its implications, and its “awareness” is one-sided.’<sup>92</sup>

This critic’s claims against the play are virtually unsupported by textual evidence and the main thrust of his argument, again unsupported, appears to be that the Irish willingly abandoned their language. In addition, referring to the Maynooth Seminar, McAvera quotes both Andrews and Friel out of context and disallows not only Friel’s use of irony but dramatic licence. Like several other critics, McAvera misinterprets the interrogative function of the Donnelly twins (off-stage agents of dis-affection) and perceives them to be ‘aspects of nationalist violence’, projecting on to them ‘actions’ of his own and not the play’s imaginings.<sup>93</sup>

McAvera’s opinions were echoed by Sean Connolly, who interpreted the play as ‘primarily anti-imperialistic propaganda ... the decline of the Irish language is a despoliation by conquerors.’ This critic begins by acknowledging that any creative writer is ‘under no obligation to stick to the “facts” of history’ and then proceeds to attack Friel on the grounds of historical inaccuracy, disallowing the play’s ironies. Despite some close reading of the text and programme notes, Sean Connolly states that ‘in this forcible subjection of one culture to another, it is the inferior that triumphs.’ He credits the play with giving the impression of ‘a popular culture which is self-sufficient and organically complete - in the words of the admiring Yolland, “a consciousness that wasn’t striving nor agitated”’ and fails to balance this with Hugh’s admission that it is a life of ‘mud huts and a diet of potatoes.’ Similarly, contrary to the evidence presented, Connolly mis-reads Hugh as ‘an accomplished

classical scholar.’ In doing so, Connolly neglects the overall context of marginalisation, inadequate diet and education, infant mortality and immigration threaded through the play. Moreover, Connolly never acknowledges the historic genesis of the hedge schools and instead, writes on two tangents. He explains the widespread teaching of the classics as part of many students ‘preparation for entry into Maynooth or one of the other Catholic seminaries’ and overall objects to the depiction of the hedge school as ‘a somewhat dubious venture since Irish, the language [Hugh] is supposedly speaking, has far fewer words of Latin origin than English, the language of Friel’s text.’ He concludes that the play and *Field Day* are ‘blinkerred and intense [in their] commitment to “tradition” ... [summing up the play as] an artificial contrast between the hopelessly idealised and the hopelessly debased ... substituting caricature and political cliché for the recreation of experience.’<sup>94</sup>

In a similar vein, Lynda Henderson interpreted *Translations* as ‘a powerfully attractive play ... politically emotive ... the delicious tragedy of martyrdom ... dangerous ... patronising the Irish ... slander[ing] the English’ and concludes that it is ‘cultural betrayal and an inside job at that.’ Henderson praises Shirley Bork’s ‘rough, white washed, stone cottage complete with thatched roof and crude wooden furniture ... perhaps a little overdecorated’ but adds that ‘this visual romanticism is perhaps not inappropriate, however, in the context of so romantic a play.’ Either Bork’s design and/or Henderson have under-read the play’s specified setting and its symbolic significance – a hedge school setting – described in the text as a ‘comfortless’ barn. Similarly, Henderson accepts Manus as a ‘caring’ and ‘disabled’ character and Sarah as ‘mutely rendered’ without further enquiry and without relating their final positions to the interrogative dynamics of the play. In addition, she praises ‘Jimmy Jack [as] a natural scholar whose divergent dream is to marry Pallas Athene.’<sup>95</sup>

There are areas of deliberate ambiguity in the play, realist-idealist tensions between life as it is and as it could be, epitomised by the exchanges between Owen and Manus and Maire and Yolland (tensions found in Friel’s three translations).<sup>96</sup> The Ordnance Survey, for example, did not displace the Gaelic placenames but standardised and recorded the most appropriate native version. Yet the dramatised passagework of names, places and associated knowledge brings us, largely through irony, to the edges of uncertainty, away from dreams of lost essence and *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*.<sup>97</sup> The world of *Translations*, as the stage directions specify, is characterised by ‘broken and forgotten implements’ with ‘no trace of a woman’s hand’ but by the end of the play the hedge school master promises to begin ‘tomorrow’ the

instruction the student Maire needs. The use of the word ‘tomorrow’ is provocatively Chekhovian. In contemporary Ireland, is it heard as hope or procrastination?

McAvera and Connolly are correct in claiming that Friel exaggerates the military aspect of Lancey and the ‘sappers’ carrying out the historic Ordnance Survey. But he undercuts this by having the sappers help with the hay-saving despite the fact that their equipment and horses are stolen and their survey is impeded. In the case of Captain Lancey, exaggeration serves to confirm self-satisfied smugness and inveracity *but* these qualities are equally apparent in Hugh. Thus Friel signals that the erosion of this community is occurring as much from within as from without. If the English appear culpable in their blind improving zeal, it is more than matched by the self-destructive dream this community holds of itself, ‘residing among immortal truths’ but in reality short of soda bread. In such a climate, with such a diet, and through the figure of the autistic waif, Sarah, Friel deconstructs reified tropes and myths. What kind of community, he asks, has allowed Sarah, like another Molser, to be inscribed as ‘dumb’? And, when she does speak, isn’t it ironic that Manus tells her, ‘no-one is listening’?

Longley, Connolly, McAvera and Henderson interpret the play as powerful and romantic but trading in mutually exclusive codes. None of them acknowledges the play’s central triumph; namely, the dismantling of the idea that the Irish are disabled because, robbed of their native tongue, they remain forever maimed, familiar but foreign to themselves and others. Translation, the play illustrates, is our living condition. The recovery of Gaelic (so often cited as ‘part of the dream of total nationhood’) is not the path Friel signposts. Dramatised in the roles of Máire Chatach and Hugh, and their final tryst, the path towards understanding and living communication exists in *reciprocity*.

When *Translations* returned to Dublin, in the 1996 Abbey production, many of the earlier popular critical mis-readings persisted.<sup>98</sup> Thus Emer O’Kelly states that the play portrays ‘[Hugh’s failings] as not merely sympathetic but admirable. Because to fail in a country governed by the contemptible English is a badge of honour.’ Compounding this conundrum, O’Kelly suggests that Hugh’s basic Latin instruction proves ‘native superiority’ and completely mis-reads the irony of using this other dead language.<sup>99</sup> Equally vacuously, Mary Carr states that the play is ‘about the nature of language and the enforced surrender of the native Irish language to English.’<sup>100</sup> Paddy Kehoe describes Hugh as ‘filled with trepidation when his son Owen becomes official translator for the troops’ ‘in a tense and fraught situation’ wherein ‘a love affair begins between the *severe* Lieutenant Yolland and local girl Marie [sic] [my emphasis].’<sup>101</sup> (Kehoe appears to have gleaned his information, including the highly inaccurate adjective ‘severe’ to describe Yolland, from the Abbey’s own flier.) In this

latest round of response, only two comments rise to the level of critical review, those of Seaona Mac Reamoinn and Medb Ruane. Seaona Mac Reamoinn comments that ‘Words take centre stage in Brian Friel’s *Translations*’ ... The play is brimming with unresolved notions of cultural identity, mythology, colonialism, a sense of place, time and history.’<sup>102</sup> In a much longer and more detailed article, Medb Ruane states: ‘The [play’s] plotline is related to historical fact — there was a major mapping exercise, the Irish language did decline as a direct result of English being the language of the new National schools set up in the same period, although the reasons are more complex than this alone. But these are parallels rather than mirrors: Friel’s fundamental act of mirroring reflects on imagination rather than on facts, creating contemporary myths all the more powerful because they feel like they are true.’<sup>103</sup>

These reviews confirm a truism: response to any play is always individual and partial. Initial responses to *Translations* were affected by established ideologies and the prevailing political climate. The 1980s production, for example, played in Dublin and London at the time of the hunger strikes at the Maze prison, which kept matters Irish constantly in the media headlines. The 1996 reviews suggest that *Translations* has now been brought within the fold of the National theatre as part of its repertoire, domesticated and naturalised. The issues it sought to raise in the 1980s, and the polarised popular responses it engendered among Northern critics, have given way to the National Theatre’s fixed interpretation despite the fact that the issues raised remain *unresolved*. Ultimately, the text of the play has fared better at an academic, rather than popular level of criticism. Several commentators address the socio-political-linguistic dynamics of the play, contextualising their readings within the historic-narrative tradition. For example, Lionel Pilkington, Eitel F. Timm, Wolfgang Zach, Csilla Bertha, Collin Meissner, F.C. McGrath, Richard Kearney, Michael Toolan and Lucia Angelica Salaris.<sup>104</sup>

But whether *Translations* is hailed as a ‘national classic’ or damned as ‘anti-imperialistic propaganda’, whether it is described as ‘dreaming history’ or ‘ clichéd imaginings’, is irrelevant since such inscriptions reveal a hunger for fixity of meaning and ignore the play’s demonstration that language is vitalised by difference and, like identity and culture, is a process, not fixed and unchanging. *Translations* is an attack on the influence of English in Ireland; there is nothing new or sinister in that. Far braver and more dangerous is the play’s subversion of the Irish idea of the Irish, its biting comment on the repeated failure to embrace change, accommodate and celebrate difference.

## x critics stop 'play'

What the critics have done exemplifies the play's theme of re-inscription and distortion. By interpretative inscription, they have demonstrated the destructive possibilities of language just as *Translations* demonstrates the power of the lie. Like the play, many of the critics' interpretations confirm Steiner's insight that 'only a small portion of human discourse is nakedly veracious or informative in any monovalent, unqualified sense.' Seizing only upon the 'romantic' elements or interpreting the play as historical fact, critics have thus reinscribed Friel's play as the culture and identity of Ireland were reinscribed. They have allowed the paradigms and images embedded in the poetics of the past to shape their response to, and interpretation of, the play and its *primary implication*: the manifold power of language, our limited grasp of it and of understanding one another through it.

The critical establishment, then, has impeded the play's scrutiny of the 'somewhere' of its own inscription and have thus stopped it being 'playful.' Why it is susceptible to accusations of nationalistic myth-mongering requires examination in terms of its intention, sign-posted in the programme notes and its borrowings. Again, interpretation of any text obviously becomes more complex when an author employs intertextuality. But a different brand of complexity arises where the semantic autonomy of any text is defined by critical oppositions which attempt to dominate and inscribe significance according to exclusive allegiances.

Critical response, symptomatic of the larger socio-political oppositions, stops the play between past and present which might have opened the text up to new readings and stifles the plurality Friel sought to encourage. The question arises as to what extent this was the result of the critics' own biases, the weight of tradition, or a lack of documentation concerning Friel's borrowings and strategies, such as historic anachronisms. Ironically, the symbolic contents of the borrowings (from Steiner, Andrews and Dowling) as well as accommodating and organising Friel's dramatisation of the themes of language and colonisation, actually retained their own life within his text. Having considered (above) the critics' response, especially instances of under-reading and, conversely, over-determination, this chapter now examines the issue of Friel's borrowings.

A critical examination of Friel's re-visioning of Irish history in *Translations* requires some understanding of *A Paper Landscape*, a scholarly voice illuminating the play's moment of historical re-mapping. With justification, John Andrews asserts that the authority of *A Paper Landscape* derives from its scrupulous recuperation of historical documentation such as the letters of John O'Donovan, the reports of Colby and Larcom, and the Ordnance maps themselves. Friel himself states that all the issues he had been pondering came into a

confluence with his reading of Andrews. In addition, the play synthesises the variables of history and imagination within the metaphor of map-making which also exists in Steiner's *After Babel*. Judging from the play's textual and philosophical reliance upon *After Babel*, this work helped Friel to construct and clarify the larger potential examination of the struggle into identity in Ireland through language.

*A Paper Landscape* records the words of the authorised and empowered involved in the mapping. But it excludes the voices of the displaced and illiterate, hidden away from written history. *A Paper Landscape* imagines the re-mapping project from historical sources and especially from the Ordnance maps themselves. *Translations* imagines the same period and re-mapping event from the perspective of the colonised. *After Babel* examines not only the theory and practice of translation, revealing it to be an endless process of interpretation, but also explores our struggle into communication and understanding through language.

As a consequence of these textual collisions, it is not only fascinating but productive to speculate on how or to what extent the influences of *A Paper Landscape* and *After Babel* are discernible within the play and if their symbolic content influenced Friel's intention. In this regard, it is pertinent to pose the question whether or not, at the end of the play, audiences recognise that the colonialisng factor was not the English themselves but their language.

In his Introduction to the Maynooth Seminar, Barry quoted one historical source recorded in *A Paper Landscape* and commented: 'at such moments as this *Translations* is already written in the haunted margins of Andrews' book.' At the same seminar, Friel himself stated that upon reading the book, 'it seemed to me, all I had to do was dramatise *A Paper Landscape*' and even though the playwright states that he subsequently 'abandoned the idea', the comment acknowledges his indebtedness to Andrews. This being so, it is pertinent to ask why no acknowledgement of *A Paper Landscape* was included in the programme notes for the first production, or why such a minimal acknowledgement of 'assistance derived' was given to Steiner's *After Babel*, when in fact it provided so much of the philosophical and theoretical linguistic underpinnings as well as much dialogue.

It is my contention that, for whatever reasons, inadequate indications of Friel's contributing sources have generated ambiguity. Had the portion of the play taken from the 1824 Rice Report been *identified* as historical and coming from Andrews, it might well have helped to establish the interrogative enterprise. Instead the portion remarking 'that all former surveys of Ireland originated in forfeitures, and violent transfers of property' (quoted in Andrews 1975 308) was placed in Lancey's mouth in Act One Scene Two. The fact that it was subsequently followed by dishonest translations by Owen underlines Friel's interrogation

of appropriation but this could have been strengthened by acknowledging that the historical source was the Rice Report (cited in Andrews).

Another example of inadequate acknowledgement surrounds the extent to which Steiner is quoted verbatim in the play. Explanation of this in the programme notes might well have lessened accusations of anti-imperialism, an interpretation which misconstrues the villain of the piece as 'the English' rather than their language. A specific acknowledgement could have located the theoretical basis of this linguistic imperialism in Steiner. Would a more open declaration of the use of *After Babel* as both totem and text have kept the play of critical interpretation and understanding more open? Might this have provided a safeguard against critics describing the play as a 'predictable event'? Clearly, spectator response to a play's performance is even more intense and unpredictable than the reading of a text where pause and recapitulation are possible. The relationship between dialogue and other sign systems (such as the set) is reciprocal and acute, unfolding in time and space with no chance of controlled pause or recapitulation such as a novel offers. Ricoeur acknowledges that 'the right of the reader and the right of the text converge in an important struggle that generates the whole dynamic of interpretation [and that] hermeneutics begin where dialogue ends.' This struggle becomes all the more intense in terms of performance and response. The exploration and recognition of this acute reciprocity (between words and meaning) are central to my thesis. And in this context of interpretation and understanding, the question arises whether Friel himself has intensified the interpretational struggle by concealing or inadequately acknowledging the sources behind his collision of history and imagination. Clearly the play adopts Steiner's view of translation as a hermeneutics of trust, penetration, embodiment, and restitution. Owen commences the act of translation but does not complete the condition of significant exchange. In terms of acknowledging significant 'assistance derived', has Friel done so? Intertextuality is absolutely valid, perhaps even essential in a post-colonial situation. But the risk of complicating the already complex relationship between words and meaning, code and message, is increased where intertextuality is unacknowledged. If *Translations* is a mapping out of the flux and struggle into communication and self-definition, if it seeks to criticise and move audiences towards an interrogative interpretation of the surrounding discourses, surely interpretative multiplicity is increased *if* all the layers contributing to the play are revealed. Only through a re-reading of these (socio-historical, political, linguistic and poetic), opening them up to play, may an understanding be gained of the power relations influencing the sphere of the poetics proper generated by the ideological forces appropriating texts and designating significance.



Friel's, or more accurately Field Day's, programme notes might well have provided a defence against critical naturalisation by indicating that the text incorporated elements of narrative history and language theory sources in order to bring about a productive re-reading of the past. Instead, the programme notes may well have been the source of complication rather than enquiry and this is examined in Appendix Two. An insight into the selection and purpose of these extracts may be gleaned from Friel's statement (in his 'Sporadic Diary' referred to above) that 'one aspect that keeps eluding me is the wholeness, the integrity, of that Gaelic past.' Does this indicate that subconsciously he had hoped to convey a sense of wholeness or essence? Friel insists that he never intended to write 'a threnody on the death of the Irish language' and that the drama is about language and the play of difference between past and present.<sup>105</sup> But his statement implies that instead of allowing a Barthesian plurality, he may well have tried to elicit response to this text with his borrowings, such as those from Dowling's *Hedge Schools*, which are emphasised in the programme extracts, and through these, to offer, even direct, a unique understanding and interpretation of the past. Friel and Field Day put considerable time and research into the selection and placing of these various extracts and, therefore, their intention and effect warrant examination. (See Appendix One). But, equally, failure to credit sources or influences, such as Andrews's *Paper Landscape*, or to provide adequate acknowledgement of borrowings from Steiner's *After Babel*, runs counter to the care given elsewhere in the programme notes and the play text and undermines the play's interrogative re-reading of the tradition and its call for a celebration of differences.

## xi conclusion

*Translations* offers a collision of history and literature, examining their socio-political and philosophical relationship and their effect upon our lives, what we gather together, value by retaining, and call our culture and tradition. *Translations* does this not out of nostalgia but in order to enlarge communication and encourage understanding. In its questioning, the play forms part of a larger discourse about communication and understanding by dramatising the individual struggle into language — self-locution and self-regard. Read in these terms, *Translations* illustrates that, for the Irish, the struggle into communication and self-definition has, for a long time, been located in a new language, English. The play suggests that the muting of any native language displaces more than sounds, and asks how a people can be themselves in the language of another. But, unlike Hyde, Corkery and Swift, Friel acknowledges that though the process of translation has been effected the challenge of self-locution remains. The play's interrogation of an historic moment in this process differs from many of its predecessors in that it calls not for revival or silence but for re-vivifying change.

In this respect, *Translations* is contiguous with the inherited dramatic tradition but departs from it in critically examining the power and politics of language affecting Ireland and indicating that the accommodation of cultural differences is a burning necessity.

Beckett said that the title of a poem or play often indicates its thesis. *Translations* demonstrates this. Several perspectives on the major themes of the role of education, family, loyalty, tradition and authority are offered and audiences are made complicit in the processes of representation and translation. Baile Beag is no edenic place for young or old, saint or scholar. Whether the selection, method of incorporation and acknowledgement of the borrowings amount to successful deconstructive strategies remains a moot point in performance, with its unpredictable grounds of reception. In this respect, *Translations* acts like a premonition of and a challenge to the limits on dramatic freedom, where the critical establishment inscribes the significance of the work according to its allegiances.

What is the 'measure' of the world dramatised by Friel? In a word, *unresolved*. Confusion and multivalencies are everywhere. Conflicting realities appear, sometimes simultaneously, to pitch Ireland between the tragic and the absurd. Such circumstances are not, for Friel, beyond resolution. Yet if, as I have pointed out in my Introduction, Friel offers no agenda, but presses us into re-reading and re-drawing Irish geography and its contours, how does he propose such a survey? By the dialectic reflected in *Translations*, and in his three Russian rewritings, Friel indicates the importance of negotiating, not only between past and present, or external and internal influences, but also between the differing and uncertain realities audible in the dialogue around us. With his rewritings of Turgenev and Chekhov he indicates that we must be 'talking to ourselves' in an idiom which interprets the present and anticipates the future with 'some kind of generosity that can embrace the whole island.' This is not a post-colonial call for authenticity but 'an outgrowth of the past', away from what AE called the 'infantile simplicity of a single idea.' The three plays examined in the following chapter confirm this decolonising progress, affirming Friel's belief in the possibilities of change — implicit in the quotations from Ricoeur and Deane prefacing this chapter — encouraging the critical reinterpretation of past traditions as living transmissions of meaning rather than reviving them as sacrosanct and unchangeable truths. Friel's three Russian plays are working examples of this critical enterprise and evidence of the productive tension between unity and difference.

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<sup>1</sup>. Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*. 1983, Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vols I, II and III. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984-88 and George Steiner's *After Babel*. 1992. Into his play, *Translations* (1980), Friel incorporates aspects

of Steiner's *After Babel*, John Andrews's *A Paper Landscape, The Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth Century Ireland*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, Colonel Colby's *A Memoir of the City and the North-West Liberties of Londonderry* and the letters of John O'Donovan (written during his term of employment on the Ordnance Survey in 1835) and J.P. Dowling's *The Hedge Schools of Ireland*. The Mercier Press, 1968. Subsequent references cited parenthetically.

<sup>2</sup>. D.E.S. Maxwell, referring to *Faith Healer* but equally appropriate to the dynamics behind *Translations*. See *A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama 1891-1908*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. 203.

<sup>3</sup>. "Universal Civilization and National Culture." *History and Truth*. 1965. 276.

<sup>4</sup>. "Heroic Styles: The Tradition of an Idea." *Ireland's Field Day*. 1985. 57

<sup>5</sup>. Jonathon Swift. "Barbarous Denominations." *Jonathon Swift: Irish Tracts, 1720-1723 and Sermons*. Ed. Louis Landa. Oxford: Blackwell, 1948: 246, 202 and 245 respectively and see esp. 199-209.

<sup>6</sup>. J.C. Beckett. "Literature in English, 1691-1800." Eds. T.W. Moody and W.E. Vaughan. *A New History of Ireland*. Vol. IV. Eighteenth-Century Ireland, 1691-1800. Introduction by J.C. Beckett. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1986. 424-470 (457).

<sup>7</sup>. See David Fitzpatrick. *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-21, Provincial Experience Of War and Revolution*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977. 279. Regarding the role of the Catholic Church in nationalist awakening, see Terence Brown, especially chapter 1, "After the Revolution, Conservatism and Continuity." *Ireland, A Social and Cultural History 1922-1985*. London: Fontana, 1985. 13-33.

<sup>8</sup>. See David Cairns and Shaun Richards. "Pissing in the Gale of History: Contemporary Protestant Culture and the 'Ancient Curse.'" Unpublished paper, Conference on the Feasibility of Consensus in Ireland, University of Keele, April, 1986.

<sup>9</sup>. Augustine Martin. "Prose Fiction in the Irish Literary Renaissance." *Irish Writers and Society at Large*. Ed. Masaru Sekine. Irish Literary Studies 22. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1985. 139-162.

<sup>10</sup>. Brian Friel. *Translations. Selected Plays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1984. Subsequent references cited parenthetically.

<sup>11</sup>. Steiner *After Babel* 1992 28-29, 30-31.

<sup>12</sup>. Brian Friel "Extracts from a Sporadic Diary." *Ireland and the Arts*. Special Issue of *Literary Review*. Ed. Tim Pat Coogan. London: Namara House, 1983, 60.

<sup>13</sup>. George Steiner. In *Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes towards the Re-Definition of Culture*. London: Faber, 1971. 13. Subsequent references cited parenthetically.

<sup>14</sup>. Interview. Friel-Carty. "Finding Voice in a Language Not Our Own." *Sunday Independent* 5 August 1980, 16.

<sup>15</sup>. It was, Friel commented, a fundamental irony that *Translations* was not written in Irish and, emphasising the necessity and possibilities for self-location, he stated, 'We must make English identifiably our own language.' Interview. Friel-Agnew. *Magill* Dec. (1980): 59-61.

<sup>16</sup>. Friel's play, *The Freedom of the City* (1973), written in the wake of Bloody Sunday, confirms, among other things, the nexus of power and language.

<sup>17</sup>. Interview. Friel-O'Toole. In *Dublin* 28 Oct. (1982): 20.

<sup>18</sup>. Hedge schools were peasant institutions, maintained by the people from Penal times up to the 1920s. Their name arose because of the custom of holding classes in the open air in fine weather and in a barn or shed generally provided by the farmer with whom the schoolmaster happened to be lodging. The survey referred to in the play was carried out by Royal Engineers for the Board of Ordnance between 1824-46.

<sup>19</sup>. James Joyce. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. 1971. 203.

<sup>20</sup>. See Paul Ricoeur. *The Reality of the Historical Past* Milwaukee: Marquette UP 1984. 51. Subsequent references cited parenthetically.

- <sup>21</sup>. Paul Ricoeur. "The Task of Hermeneutics." *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*. Trans. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1981, esp. 61-62. Subsequent references cited parenthetically.
- <sup>22</sup>. Brian Friel. 'Extracts from a Sporadic Diary.' Ed. Tim Pat Coogan. *Ireland and the Arts*. Special Issue of *Literary Review*. London: Namara House, 1983, 57.
- <sup>23</sup>. For example, Dowling quotes one James Nash of Waterford as saying, 'every potato field shall be a Marathon, and every borean a Thermopylae' and this is echoed in Bridget's account of Jimmy Jack 'jumping up and down and shouting "Thermopylae! Thermopylae"' (*T* 435) in protest against the advancing English soldiers. See Dowling 1968. 113.
- <sup>24</sup>. Andrews prefaces his work with a note recognising that the writers of history are at least as fallible as the map-makers. Andrews 1975 xi. See Kevin Barry's article "Translations and A Paper Landscape: Between Fiction and History, Brian Friel, John Andrews and Kevin Barry." *The Crane Bag* 7.2. (1983): 118-124. Hereafter referred to as the 'Maynooth Seminar (1983).'
- <sup>25</sup>. See Steiner's discussion of linguistic exogamy. Steiner 1992. 242.
- <sup>26</sup>. Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh. "The Struggle for emancipation and independence, 1809-1918." *The Irish World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1977. 187.
- <sup>27</sup>. Norman Atkinson. *Irish Education: A History of Educational Institutions*. Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1969. 101.
- <sup>28</sup>. Séamus Ó Buachalla. "The Language in the Classroom." *The Crane Bag* 5.2. (1981): 21.
- <sup>29</sup>. In the sixty years after this Ordnance Survey, eight hundred and fiftyfive out of every one thousand people could not speak Gaelic, illustrating the rapidity with which Ireland was propelled in to another mind set. See Brian Ó Cuiv. *A View of the Irish Language*. Dublin: Dublin Stationary Office, 1969. 99. See also F.S.L. Lyons. *Ireland Since the Famine*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973: 88n and *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1935*. Oxford. New York: Oxford UP, 1982.
- <sup>30</sup>. See Atkinson 1969. 97.
- <sup>31</sup>. See Lyons 1973. 88-9 and Steiner 1992. 492-3.
- <sup>32</sup>. Friel Maynooth Seminar (1983): 118-124 (122).
- <sup>33</sup>. See Friel regarding his re-interpretation of O'Donovan. *Ibid.* 118-124 (123).
- <sup>34</sup>. See: Friel "Extracts from a Sporadic Diary" Coogan 1983. 60.
- <sup>35</sup>. Andrews Maynooth Seminar (1983): 118-24 and 120 respectively.
- <sup>36</sup>. *Ibid* 123.
- <sup>37</sup>. See Walter Benjamin. "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *Illuminations*. Intro. and ed. by Hannah Arendt. London: Cape, 1970. 57 and Ricoeur Vol II 1984-88. 69-70.
- <sup>38</sup>. According to such a perspective, that which cannot be expressed through a name is inconceivable and, therefore, unreal. In such an ontological frame of reference, the correspondence between words and facts is felt to be interlocked and absolute. Consequently, if names are changed or substituted, they invalidate or even erase the original correspondence. According to Ricoeur, such an ontological perspective involves understanding not just as a simple mode of knowing but a way of being and of relating to beings and being. Ricoeur. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*. 1981. See also Marc Silverstein. "It's Only a Name: Schemes of Identification and the National Community in Translations." *Études Théâtrales* (Canada) 1992: 33-42.
- <sup>39</sup>. Edna Longley. *Poetry in the Wars*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books 1986. 119. See also: Sean Connolly's essay "Dreaming History: Brian Friel's *Translations*." *Theatre Ireland* 13 (1987): 42-44, considerably revised and enlarged as "Translating History: Brian Friel and the Irish Past." *The Achievement of Brian Friel*. Ed. Alan J. Peacock. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1993, 149-163. In response to Longley's and Connolly's criticism, it is pertinent to note that in the script, the first time Yolland suggests Baile Beag is 'heavenly', Owen immediately undercuts this, stating 'the first hot summer in fifty years and you think it's Eden. Don't be such a bloody romantic. You wouldn't survive a mild winter here' (*T* 414), indicating the harsh reality of the place.

<sup>40</sup>. In this regard, see Steiner's comments regarding the vulgate of Eden and powers of statement and designation (as illustrated in the re-naming exchange between Owen and Yolland in Act two). Steiner 1992. 60.

<sup>41</sup>. Irving Wardle. Review of *Translations*. *The Times*. 13 May 1981, 11.

<sup>42</sup>. Friel. Diary entry 18 Jun. 1979. "Extracts from a Sporadic Diary" Coogan 1983. 61.

<sup>43</sup>. Connolly. "Dreaming History: Brian Friel's *Translations*." *Theatre Ireland* 13 (1987): 42-44 (43).

<sup>44</sup>. Andrews. Maynooth Seminar (1983): 118-124 (121-2).

<sup>45</sup>. Interview. Friel-Christopher Morash. "Flamethrowers: Contemporary Northern Irish Playwrights." Unpublished M. Phil. diss. Trinity College, Dublin, 1986. 41.

<sup>46</sup>. In this context, see Terry Eagleton on the significance of F.R. Leavis' teaching at Cambridge University. Terry Eagleton. *Literary Theory, An Introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983. 29-32. See also Tomas Ó Flannaghaile. "A Superior English Education." *For The Tongue of the Gael*. Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, 1896. 7-9.

<sup>47</sup>. Ciarn Carty. "Finding Voice in a Language Not Our Own." *Sunday Independent* 5 Aug. 1980, 16.

<sup>48</sup>. See Frederick Engel's letter to Jenny Longuet of 24 Feb. 1881 in *Ireland and the Irish Question: A Collection of Writings by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*. Eds. L.I. (Lev Isaakovich) Golman and R. Dixon. New York: International Publishers, 1972. 329.

<sup>49</sup>. Implicit in the discussion which follows is the recognition that Friel himself has no nostalgia for the type of past portrayed in *Translations*, a fact he confirms in "Talking to Ourselves", when interviewed by Paddy Ignew. *Magill*. December (1980): 60.

<sup>50</sup>. See Dowling 1968. 23, 49, 115f.

<sup>51</sup>. It is worth noting that Friel inverts this gesture in *Three Sisters* and in *A Month in the Country* to show the colonising aspects of Natasha and Chebutykin and of Natalya in their respective plays.

<sup>52</sup>. In his study on Friel, Ulf Dantanus states that 'the confusion between Yolland and Maire over the word "always" [T 429-30] suggests the final failure of translation.' *Brian Friel* 1986.176. However, Steiner considers that the word "always" raises the larger and more complex issue of language in relation to future time and our projection of it. Steiner 1992. 141.

<sup>53</sup>. *Translations* speculates as to why critical self-location proves so difficult in Ireland. See: Kevin Whelan. *The Tree of Liberty, Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830*. Cork: Cork UP in association with Field Day 1996. Subsequent references cited parenthetically.

<sup>54</sup>. Jacob, grandson of Abraham and twin brother of Esau, lead the initial settlement of Palestine.

<sup>55</sup>. Ideally, 'belonging' is both a linguistic and an embodied experience. Where characters leave this behind, they risk some form of annihilation, as Friel demonstrates in a series of plays, including *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, *Faith Healer*, *Fathers and Sons* and particularly *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

<sup>56</sup>. See Steiner's discussion of linguistic exogamy 1992. 242.

<sup>57</sup>. This insight, like the dialogue among Owen, Yolland and Hugh, (T 416-419) invokes Steiner's affirmation that translation

properly understood, is a special case of the arc of communication which every successful speech-act closes within a given language ... *inside or between* languages, human communication equals translations ... There appears to be no correlation, moreover, between linguistic wealth and other resources of a community. Idioms of fantastic elaboration and refinement coexist with utterly primitive, economically harsh modes of subsistence. Often, cultures seem to expend on their vocabulary and syntax acquisitive energies and ostentations entirely lacking in their material lives. Linguistic riches seem to act as a compensatory mechanism.

In addition, Steiner states that, 'The landscape composed by the past tense, the semantic organization of remembrance is styled and differently coded by different cultures [so that] languages communicate inward to the native speaker with a density and pressure of shared imitation which are only partly

grudgingly yielded to the outsider' (1992 56, 29 and 285 respectively). This is the dynamic Friel sets up between Owen and Yolland.

<sup>58</sup>. This is signalled by London's imperious missive to Lancey, who in turn screams for expediency at Yolland (*T* 411), and by the antagonisms which open up between Owen and his family (*T* 438; 445).

<sup>59</sup>. As Steiner warns, when the translator skimps, elides or cuts out awkward corners, the outflow of energy from the source is likely to be swamped by the colonising inflow of the receptor. 'Genuine translation will, therefore, seek to equalize, though the mediating steps may be lengthy and oblique.' Steiner 1992. 318.

<sup>60</sup>. Steiner comments that

uncertainty of meaning is incipient poetry [and that] in every fixed definition there is obsolescence or failed insight. The teeming plurality of languages enacts the fundamentally creative, "counter-factual" genius and psychic functions of language itself. It moves away from unison and acceptance ... to the polyphonic, ultimately divergent fascination of manifold specificity.

Steiner 1992. 246.

<sup>61</sup>. This invocation of Steiner could have been acknowledged, I believe, with benefit in the programme notes, an issue addressed later.

<sup>62</sup>. Steiner summarises the triadic model which has historically dominated the theory and practice of translation, and then examines it as a four-part hermeneutic motion of trust, of penetration, of embodiment, and of restitution (this last creating a reciprocity between the two language systems). Steiner 1992. 1-50, 312-425.

<sup>63</sup>. Ricoeur comments:

When we describe the past correctly, it is not past facts which are drawn out of our memories but only words based on our memory-pictures of those facts, because when they happened they left an impression on our minds, by means of our sense-perception. (18:23).

Ricoeur Vol I, page 232, endnote 14.

<sup>64</sup>. Friel *The Irish Times* 14 Sep. 1982.

<sup>65</sup>. She is an indictment of the Gaelic pastoral enshrined by writers, politicians and critics alike, despite the contradictory reality. See De Valera's 1943 St. Patrick's Day speech cited in "Political Writings and Speeches 1900-1988" section of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. Vol III. Ed. Seamus Deane. Derry: Field Day Publications 1991 681-813 (748).

<sup>66</sup>. This narrow inscription of the Yolland-Maire relationship is reminiscent of the over-reaction of critics to the love scenes between Pegeen Mike and Christy Mahon in Synge's *Playboy* in 1907. These earlier critics ignored the fact that Synge's play, which they denounced as titillating, drew upon the Gaelic love songs of Connacht. Such critics failed or refused to acknowledge the radical implications of the Gaelic law and culture, liberal to the point of permissiveness in their concern for the fulfillment of a woman in marriage. See Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh. "The Role of Women in Ireland under the New English Order." *Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension*. eds. MacCurtain and Ó Corráin. Dublin: Women's Press, 1978. 1-13 and 26-35.

<sup>67</sup>. On an intertextual level these names and their non-communication relate back to the darkness surrounding the figures of Manus and Sarah in *The Gentle Island*, the savagely ironic title of another play that explodes the Gaelic pastoral myth.

<sup>68</sup>. See Barry Maynooth Seminar (1983):118-124.

<sup>69</sup>. In some cases the critical judgements of reviewers in relation to *Translations* did not appear to be influenced by the political or 'religious' orientation of the newspaper for which they wrote. However, in relation to the divergent critical response among Irish reviewers, a note of particular papers' political orientation is indicated below:

**unionist:** *Londonderry Sentinel*, *Belfast Telegraph*, *Belfast Newsletter*, *the Sunday News*, *Armagh Guardian*, *Coleraine Chronicle*, *Ulster Gazette* and *the Armagh Standard*.

**nationalist:** *Derry Journal*, *Derry People & Donegal News*, *Strabane Chronicle*, *Ulster Herald*, *Dungannon Observer* and the *Fermanagh News*.

**national newspapers in the Republic of Ireland (and their orientation):** *Irish Times* (establishment); *Irish Press* (founded by Éamon de Valera and historically associated with Fianna Fáil), *Evening Press*, and *Sunday Press*; *Irish Independent* (Fine Gael), *Evening Herald*, *Sunday Independent*; *Cork Examiner*.

<sup>70</sup>. As variously suggested by Martin Esslin "Translations." *Plays and Players* Nov. (1981): 217-219; Richard Pine "Finding the Right Words." *Sunday Press* 25 Sep. 1983.; Michael Sheridan "Translated Logic ..." *Irish Press* 23 Sep. 1980, Michael Sheridan "Friel Play a Watershed in Irish Theatre." *Irish Press* 25 Aug. 1980.3, Michael Sheridan "Triumph for Translations." *Irish Press* 25 Sep. 1980. 4, and Irving Wardle. "Translations." *The Times* 13 May 1981, 11. and Julie Kavanagh. "Friel at Last." *Vanity Fair*. Oct. 1991.

<sup>71</sup>. Lynda Henderson "A Dangerous Translation." *Fortnight* 235 10-25 Mar. (1986): 24.

<sup>72</sup>. Brian McAvera "Brian Friel: Attuned to the Catholic Experience." *Fortnight* 3 Mar. (1985): 19-20.

<sup>73</sup>. Edna Longley "Poetry and Politics in Northern Ireland." *Crane Bag* 9.1. (1985): 28-9.

<sup>74</sup>. Sean Connolly "Dreaming History: Brian Friel's Translations." *Theatre Ireland* 12 (1987): 42-4.

<sup>75</sup>. Maynooth Seminar (1983): 118-124.

<sup>76</sup>. For example: Betty Lowry "Friel Play Makes It a Great Night in Derry" *Belfast Telegraph* 24 Sep. 1980, Anon. "Standing Ovation for Friel's Translations." *Derry Journal* 26 Sept 1980, Frank McGinley "A City to Rival Juno's." *Donegal Democrat* 26 Sep. 1980, Martin O'Brien "Impressive Translations." *Belfast Telegraph* 30 Sep. 1980, John Jordan "Triumphant Translations." *Hibernia* 9 Oct. 1980, Martha McClelland "Translations." *An Phoblacht/Republican News* 11 Oct. 1980 and Gus Smith "As Friel's Peasant Play Dominates Second Festival Week ..." *Sunday Independent* 12 Oct. 1980.

<sup>77</sup>. Emer O'Kelly "A defensive treatise for cultural nationalism." *Sunday Independent* 4 Aug. 1996. Mary Carr "Using language Friel-ly." *Evening Herald* 1 Aug. 1996, Lorcan Roche "A near perfect performance." *Irish Independent* 1 Aug. 1996, Gerry Colgan "The Casting Game." *The Irish Times* 1 Aug. 1996 and Paddy Kehoe "Translations." *Radio Telefís Éireann Guide* 2 Aug. 1996.

<sup>78</sup>. Colm Cronin "Disasters — and Translations." *Irish Press* 25 Sep. 1980.

<sup>79</sup>. John Jordan "Triumphant Translations." *Hibernia* 9 Oct. 1980.

<sup>80</sup>. McGinley Review. *Donegal Democrat* 26 Sep. 1980.

<sup>81</sup>. Anon. "Aistriúcháin." *Irish Times* 15 Oct. 1980.

<sup>82</sup>. Desmond Rushe Review. *Irish Independent* 25 Sep. 1980.

<sup>83</sup>. Gus Smith "As Friel's Peasant Play Dominates Second Festival Week ..." *Sunday Independent*, 12 Oct. 1980.

<sup>84</sup>. Martha McClelland "Translations." *An Phoblacht* 11 Oct. 1980.

<sup>85</sup>. Betty Lowry "Friel Play Makes It a Great Night in Derry." *Belfast Telegraph* 24 Sep. 1980.

<sup>86</sup>. Judith Rosenfield "Unusual and Erudite." *Belfast Newsletter* 1 Oct. 1980.

<sup>87</sup>. Seamus Heaney, "... English and Irish." Review of *Translations* in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* 24 Oct. 1980: 1199.

<sup>88</sup>. Such as Wardle, *The Times*, 13 Sep. 1981: 11, B.A. Young, *Financial Times*, 14 May 1981: 21, and Esslin, *Plays and Players*, Nov. (1981) 217-219.

<sup>89</sup>. Such as Heaney, *The Times Higher Education Supplement* 24 Oct. 1980: 1199, Henderson, *Fortnight* 235, 10-23 Mar. (1986): 24 and McClelland *An Phoblacht* 11 Oct. 1980.

<sup>90</sup>. See McClelland *An Phoblacht* 11 Oct. 1980.

<sup>91</sup>. Here Longley uses John Wilson Foster's lines about John Montague's *The Rough Field* and applies these to *Translations* in "Poetry and Politics in Northern Ireland," *Crane Bag* 9.1 (1985): 28-9.

<sup>92</sup>. Brian McAvera "Brian Friel: Attuned to the Catholic Experience" *Fortnight* 3 Mar. (1985): 19-20.

- <sup>93</sup>. See Martin Esslin *Plays and Players* Nov. 1981: 36, James Fenton *The Sunday Times* 28 Sep. 1980 and Emer O'Kelly *Sunday Independent* 4 August 1996.
- <sup>94</sup>. Sean Connolly "Dreaming History: Brian Friel's *Translations*." *Theatre Ireland* 13 (1987): 42-44.
- <sup>95</sup>. Lynda Henderson "A Dangerous Translation." *Fortnight* 235 10-23 Mar. (1986): 24.
- <sup>96</sup>. Friel foregrounds these same tensions between Tusenbach and Solyony, Bazarov and Arkady and Rakitin and Belyayev.
- <sup>97</sup>. *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* (set on the eve of the 1798 Rising but by Yeats's own admission written as a vehicle for Maud Gonne) persuaded patriots to leave their hearths and willingly give up their lives for Ireland/Cathleen Ni Houlihan. In effect, when Hugh tells how he and Jimmy Jack did not take part in the 1798 Rising (an inter-denominational revolt) he demonstrates that *Translations* is totally antithetical to Yeats's play and its call. See W.B. Yeats. *Cathleen Ni Houlihan. Collected Plays*, London: Macmillan, 1953, 75-88.
- <sup>98</sup>. Eight years later, Gerry Dukes, responding to the 1988 Gaiety production, assumes that, 'the central action of the play is *too well known* to need rehearsing here but ... this production admirably catches its multivalency' [my emphasis]. However, Dukes then comments that 'when the eviction becomes literal, Owen reverts to his tribal loyalties' (akin to Esslin's under-reading) and concludes that the play shows how, 'under the pressure of history the agents of change resume their ancient factiousness.' In effect, Dukes, like many predecessors, contains the play's enquiry literally at a level of foreign and familiar faction. Gerry Dukes "*Translations*, Gaiety Theatre." *Theatre Ireland* Aug. (1988): 38
- <sup>99</sup>. Emer O'Kelly "A defensive treatise for cultural nationalism." *Sunday Independent* 4 Aug. 1996.
- <sup>100</sup>. Mary Carr "Using language Friel-ly." *Evening Herald* 1 Aug. 1996.
- <sup>101</sup>. Paddy Kehoe "*Translations*." *Radio Telefis Eireann Guide* 2 Aug. 1996.
- <sup>102</sup>. Seona Mac Reamoinn "On Friel revisited." *The Tribune Magazine* 4 Aug. 1996.
- <sup>103</sup>. Medb Ruane erroneously calls the Survey, 'Her Majesty's' and comments that its 'symbolic damage was staggering ... a massive displacement.' Medb Ruane "Mapping the mystery of history." Medb Ruane *The Sunday Times* 11 Aug. 1996, 53.
- <sup>104</sup>. See: Lionel Pilkington "Language and Politics in Brian Friel's *Translations*." *Irish University Review* 20.2. Autumn (1990): 282-98, Eitel F. Timm, "Modern Mind, Myth, and History: Brian Friel's *Translations*." Ed. Heinz Kosok. *Studies in Anglo-Irish Literature*. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1982.447-53; Wolfgang Zach "Brian Friel's *Translations*: National and Universal Dimensions." Ed Richard Wall. *Medieval and Modern Ireland*. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1988.75-87; Csilla Bertha "Tragedies of National Fate: A Comparison between Brian Friel's *Translations* and its Hungarian Counterpart, András Sütö's *A szuzai menyegzo*." *Irish University Review* Autumn (1987): 207-222; Collin Meissner "Words Between Worlds: The Irish language, the English Army, and the Violence of Translation in Brian Friel's *Translations*." *Colby Quarterly* Autumn (1987): 164-173; F.C. McGrath "Irish Babel: Brian Friel's *Translations* and George Steiner's *After Babel*." *Comparative Drama* Winter (1988): 31-49 and "Language, myth, and history in the later plays of Brian Friel." *Contemporary Literature* 30. 4. (1989): 534-45. Richard Kearney "Language Play: Brian Friel and Ireland's Verbal Theatre." *Studies* 72 Spring (1983): 20-56; Michael Toolan "Language and Affective Communication in some Contemporary Irish writers." *Cultural Contexts and Literary Idioms in Contemporary Irish Literature*. Ed. Michael Kenneally. Irish Literary Studies 31. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1988. 138-153 and Lucia Angelica Salaris "The Masks of Language in *Translations*." *Perspectives of Irish Drama and Theatre*. Eds. Jacqueline Genet and Richard Allen Cave. Irish Literary Studies 33. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1996. 101-114.
- <sup>105</sup>. Brian Friel "Extracts from a Sporadic Diary." Coogan. London: Namara House, 1983, 60.



**Chapter III *Three Sisters***

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### Chapter summary

In this and the following two chapters I argue that Friel's three translations are intra-lingual rewritings, and that while none has been rewritten according to a particular template, each is marked by the same primary consideration or self-imposed task of the inter-lingual translator, that is, to select what elements in the text are of primary value to him and his audiences and to handle the text in such a way as to highlight these crucial elements. In the light of this principle, three major tendencies distinguish Friel's work as a translator-interpreter: his ability boldly to recreate, his ability to appropriate, or more accurately, re-appropriate, and his ability to subordinate his own personality in order to adopt a stance and form of utterance fascinatingly analogous with his own but different to his normal writing. These claims will be developed hereafter, with reference to specific textual examples.

Described on the title-page as a translation, Friel's *Three Sisters* (1981) follows the original almost speech by speech and is, in fact, a composition garnered from a number of existing translations of Chekhov's 1901 tragicomedy and re-cast in the idiom of contemporary Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Friel's intention was to re-create a dramatic, not a literal equivalent.

Friel's intention centres around communicative function and aesthetic decolonisation. His *Three Sisters* contests what he calls 'Edwardian' and 'Bloomsbury' interpretations of Chekhov and the notion of a standard or universally ideal translation. His version calls attention to the differences between Irish and English aesthetics and idiom, signposted in *Translations* but largely ignored by many critics. There, Hugh tells the young English officer, 'we are not familiar with your literature, lieutenant. ... We tend to overlook your island' (*T* 417). As indicated in my Introduction, Friel's three translations constitute a form of 'overlooking' — not ignoring but rather critically re-reading three aesthetics and their idioms: that of 'standard' English, that of the Anglo-Irish tradition (with its double allegiance to the English language and to Irish life) and that of Friel's home, Ireland and, specifically, the North of Ireland.

Using my analysis of Friel's text and critical response to this translation and Field Day's production of it, I move through the above claims, contending that Friel's intention and achievement have been under-read. This is, I believe, due to a lack of critical infrastructure to identify and deal with such translations but also to critical conservatism. (In this regard, I look briefly at other innovatory translations and productions of the same play.)

In his *Three Sisters*, Friel creates a figurative music (forming and extending imaginative, emotional and ideological expressions akin to that of Chekhov),<sup>2</sup> but he also creates a literal

music (of Irish speech rhythms and cadences).<sup>3</sup> Through a play of anachronisms, at certain points, Friel establishes a deliberate cacophony. In these moments of dissonance, audiences are caught in the tension between realist/satirist and idealist/fantast perspectives, recalling similar moments of ambiguity in *Translations* and for similar reasons.

the translation will truly be a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself in enlarging itself ... And if the original calls for a complement, it is because at the origin it was not there without fault, full, complete, total, identical to itself. (Derrida)<sup>4</sup>

writing and the rewriting is ultimately responsible, not just for the canonization of specific authors or specific works and the rejection of others, but also for the evolution of a given literature, since rewritings are often designed precisely to push a given literature in a certain direction. (Lefevere)<sup>5</sup>

### i why rewrite?

As the extracts from Derrida and Lefevere which preface this analysis suggest, translation and rewriting present us with the challenges and possibilities of growth and evolution. They may, as Bassnett-McGuire points out, be ‘produced in the service, or under the constraints of certain ideological and/or poetical currents.’<sup>6</sup> This is the ground that I assume in my analysis, that rewritings may, in their positive aspect, ‘help in the evolution of a literature and a society.’<sup>7</sup> The work of Bassnett-McGuire and of Lefevre have opened up the process of translation and reception in a manner antagonistic to the orthodox prescriptions by insisting that translation is a form of growth and they recognise the necessity to strategically alter any piece of work in order to bring it into line with the living experience and conditions of its new reception whilst remaining alert to the distortions of emphasis that are part and parcel of the act of translation. But if, as Walter Benjamin suggests, ‘the task of the translator is to liberate the language’, it is equally the task of the critical mind to examine the translating writer’s constraints and context, since these may help elucidate the writer’s intention and help evaluate his achievement. In short, I argue for a socio-historical analysis of Friel’s translations.

Accordingly, I maintain that Friel’s translations reveal that his central interest (as with all his plays) concerns the relationship between words and socio-political power, between language and identity, and that his theatre endorses the possibilities of effective communication through self-locution. An underlying concern voiced in Friel’s translations and a recurring theme in his drama involve representation and an awareness of the shaping power of one culture upon another, particularly, through the power of language.

As discussed in the previous chapter, *Translations* expressed Friel's and Field Day's aim 'to forge a Northern-based theatre company ... to perform plays of excellence in a distinctively Irish voice that would be heard throughout the whole of the island' and 'to contribute to a recension of the writing of Ireland, re-reading the context and influences of historical and creative narratives and, by implication, the power of language itself to organise life.'<sup>8</sup> When asked about the rationale behind Field Day's artistic and political aims, and his rewriting of Chekhov, Friel replied that he wasn't sure about either concept or their interrelationship saying, 'I'd love to be preachy but I'm not sure what the sermon is.' Such a statement reflects Friel's personal reluctance to polemicise and indicates the wider frame of reference of his work as well as Field Day's creative and critical nature. Pressed for the reasoning behind his version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, he stated, 'there's a calculated risk about tackling it in a new way ... it's all a question of music. The audience will hear a different music to anything they've heard in Chekhov before.'<sup>9</sup>

Friel's reference to music is both literal and metaphorical. His use of music involves a recognition that beneath the shared code and rhythms of any language there exists a private base, of vital association, of latent and realised context. Although oblique, Friel's comments offer one indication of Field Day's artistic-political aim: to un-cover the hidden (Ireland), to articulate the creative and critical discursive inheritance and, through analysis, contribute to communication and understanding of the present and its relationship to the past. But whether Friel's translations are produced by Field Day or any other group, undoubtedly they represent Chekhov and Turgenev in a language, Hiberno English, which acknowledges its own hybridity and the competing meanings and expressions of characters shaped by such a language experience. This is the significance underlying the use of Hiberno English, a claim reflected in Field Day's press release for *Three Sisters* describing it as

[a] translation in the deepest sense of the word interpret[ing] Chekhov's masterpiece for contemporary audiences ... conveying not only the meaning of the original words but also the essence and significance of Chekhov's vision ... *illuminating for us the complexities and confusions of life in Ireland today* [my emphasis].<sup>10</sup>

Friel's translation, and Field Day's production of it, confirmed that Chekhov's insights about 'a group of persons devoid of a centre',<sup>11</sup> could be meaningfully re-read within an Irish context. As Raymond Williams points out, *Three Sisters* depicts characters 'longing to make sense of life, to make sense of a future, in a stagnant and boring military-provincial society.'

The desire for liberation has passed into the group as a whole, but at the same time has become hopeless, inward-looking – in effect a defeat before the struggle has even begun. Chekhov ... is ... writing about a

generation whose whole energy is consumed in the very process of becoming conscious of their own inadequacy and impotence.<sup>12</sup>

With sometimes minimal alteration, Friel re-creates Chekhov's observations, showing how a past ('Moscow'), not been fully comprehended, can blight the future. With a Northern edge, Friel confronts Irish understanding not only of a Russian world but also that of Ireland. Affirming that 'there are bigger truths beyond that of the literal translation', Friel's translation practices are governed by his desire to communicate and encourage enquiry and communion.<sup>13</sup>

## ii characters from Finner and Tullamore

In 1980, referring to 'standard' translations of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, Friel commented:

Somehow the rhythms of these versions do not match with the rhythms of our own speech patterns, and I think that they ought to, in some way. Even the most recent English translation again carries, of necessity, very strong English cadences and rhythms. This is something about which I feel strongly - in some way we are constantly overshadowed by the sound of the English language, as well as by the printed word. Maybe this does not inhibit us, but it forms us and shapes us in a way that is neither healthy nor valuable for us ...<sup>14</sup>

Once again, it is apparent that Friel does not reject the English language, but rather its influence. This is made abundantly clear in his three translations, together with his recognition that idiom and evaluation are culture-bound and at the mercy of intellectual fashions and pragmatic needs. Ultimately, Friel's translations question the structural implications of the accredited weight and influence in Ireland of the English literary tradition with its fixed interpretative gaze because, as he indicates, an independent Irish theatre need not be governed by the aesthetics of others, no matter how rich.

Referring specifically to his rewriting of Chekhov's play, *Three Sisters*, Friel says:

I wrote this play in an Irish idiom because with English translations Irish actors become more and more remote. They have to pretend, first of all, that they're English and then that they're Russians. I'd like our audience to see Captains and Lieutenants who look as if they came from Finner or Tullamore. The decolonisation process of the imagination is very important if a new Irish personality is to emerge.<sup>15</sup>

This statement confirms Friel's recognition that autonomy from language and ideology is impossible but equally his statement endorses the innovatory possibilities of the play of differences and hybridity which rewritings facilitate. Through idiomatic visibility and specific alterations (discussed below) Friel's translations contest both the hegemony of 'standard' English translations and, also, their interpretation of Chekhov as a form of cultural

elitism. The English view of Chekhov and Turgenev in the early twentieth century was that they were somehow more polished, less crude and raw than Tolstoy or Dostoevsky. One consequence was that English productions of Chekhov's plays tended to present his characters as if they were English upper middle class types, an interpretation and reception reinforced by the performances of Redgrave, Olivier and Gielgud. But equally important, by asserting the validity of differences, Friel's translations also caution the Irish against *shoneenism* and their own essentialist tendencies by encouraging a sensitivity towards alien languages and the 'alien' or heteroglot qualities within their own language. Friel's *Three Sisters* accomplishes this by opening up to play the cultural-semantic differences between 'standard' English and Hiberno English, promoting an expressive communication akin to a 'paradigm shift' because, as he has commented, 'Irish audiences have only heard Chekhov through English words.' During the nine months Friel took to make his translation, he consulted various established translations. One of these was Constance Garnett's, who adheres to a strict literal code so that set phrases such as '*tsarstvo ei nebesnoe*' are rendered not by the corresponding idiom ('God rest her soul') but word for word ('The Kingdom of Heaven be hers'). This is the sort of awkwardness that Friel sought to avoid, searching for a more immediate phrasing. His *Three Sisters* appears to ask, 'Have you heard this before?' and 'What do you hear now?' In the Ricoeurian sense of striving for a re-invigoration of and connection with the sedimented paradigms, Friel's innovations remain relative to the sedimented literary tradition but, in contemporary Northern vernacular, they relate unapologetically to current Irish reality and, as indicated at the outset, warrant a socio-historical approach.

### iii different Olgas

One of the most concise examples of this claim is found in Olga's closing speech, where Friel privileges the word 'peace' over 'happiness' and adds the word, 'content.' Heard or read within the context of Northern Ireland in the 1980s, these single words must have conjured a condition longed for by many.

Just listen to that music. It's so assured, so courageous. It makes you want to go on, doesn't it? Oh my God! Yes, of course we will die and be forgotten — everything about us, how we looked, how we spoke, that there were three of us. But our happiness, our suffering, won't be wasted. They're preliminary to better times, and because of them the people who come after us will inherit a better life - *a life of peace and content and happiness*. And they will look on us with gratitude and with love. But our life isn't over yet. By no means! We are going to go on living! And that music is so confident, so courageous, it almost seems as if it is about

to be revealed very soon why we are alive and what our suffering is for. If only we knew that. If only we knew that. (*TS* 114) [my emphasis].

In Russian this speech (quoted below) is over one third less in length than Friel's version which is also longer than a literal translation (also quoted below):

Ol'ga: [*obnimaet obeikh sester*] *Muzyka igraet tak veselo, bodro, i khochetsia zhit'! O, bozhe moi! Proidet vremia, i my uidem naveki, nas zabudut, zabudut nashi litsa, golosa i skol'ko nas bylo, no stradaniia nashi pereidut v radost' dlia tekh, kto budet zhit' posle nac, schast'e i mir nastanut na zemle, i pomianut dobrym slovom i blagosloviat tekh, kto zhivet teper'. O, milye sestry, zhizn' nasha eshche ne konchena. Budem zhit'! Muzyka igraet tak veselo, tak radostno, i, kazhetsia, eshche nemnogo, i my uznaem, zachem my zhivem, zachem stradaem ... Esli by znat', esli by znat'!*<sup>16</sup>

This translates literally as:

Olga: [embraces both sisters] The music plays so cheerfully, brightly, and [it makes] you want to live. O my God!. Time will go by, and we shall go away for ever, they will forget us, forget our faces and how many of us there were, but our sufferings will pass over into joy for those, who will live after us, happiness and peace will come on earth, and they will remember [us] with a kind word and bless those who live now. O, dear sisters, our life is still not finished. We shall go on living! The music plays so cheerfully, so joyfully, it seems, a little bit more, and we shall find out, what we are living for, what we are suffering for ... If we could know, if we could know.<sup>17</sup>

However, it is instructive to note that in Russian, the last phrase, *esli by znat'*, does not include the pronoun 'we'; it is an infinitive. The connotation is more one of, 'if humankind could know' or 'if one could know.' And, as indicated in the previous chapter, Friel constantly uses the inclusive pronoun throughout his three rewritings, which tends to lengthen phrasing but is nevertheless used decisively. Here, it functions as a salutary response to Irina's faith in the narcotic effect of 'work' and Masha's assertion that 'we have got to go on living', both of which are juxtaposed against Chebutykin's nihilism. For the sisters, as with many of their Irish audiences, living has become almost synonymous with suffering. But Chebutykin's song and conclusion that it 'Matters sweet damn all ... sweet damn all it matters' (*TS* 114) threaten the life affirmations of the sisters, each building upon the fragile expressions of the other. Chebutykin's phrase is from a well-known nineteenth century music-hall song but, indicative of the evocative and gapped dialogue of Chekhov, he does not conclude the song, leaving this to contemporary audiences who would have known the

closing phrase, “And I weep bitterly that I mean little [i.e. that I am of little significance]”. If Chekhov intended this unspoken phrase to undercut the sisters’ optimism summed up in Irina’s call to ‘work’ and Olga’s promise ‘a little bit more, and we shall find out, what we are living for, what we are suffering for ...’, Friel uses the sisters’ responses to inspire hope and change. With the repetition of Olga’s phrase, ‘If we only knew. Oh, if we only knew’ (*TS* 114), the movement towards hope and possibilities of change is re-affirmed even though it has been threatened with the death of Tusenbach, the departure of Vershinin, the fading music of the military band and the dejected presence of Chebutykin.

Repeated a third and fourth time, Olga’s phrase is clearly not naturalistic dialogue. It is, however, indicative of one type of music in Chekhov, and something that Friel has gleaned. This patterning (of repetitions, ellipsis, pauses, non-sequiturs, arrivals and departures and off-stage sounds and characters) is part of the recurring music of Chekhov. Its cadences and resonant phrasing articulate the flux and cycle of life and individual emotions so that it is possible to argue that the end of *Three Sisters*, in effect, mirrors many of the opening scene’s enquiries. There, Olga muses on the lives of the sisters, clustered around their father: ‘Early in May. Just like now. And it seemed as if everything was about to ... to blossom.’ She concludes with the statement that this morning she felt elated and ‘yearned to go back home [to Moscow] again’ (*TS* 10). Her longing for a sense of direction and purpose (expressed downstage) is indirectly but immediately undercut by a snippet of conversation between Chebutykin and Tusenbach (upstage), ‘Rubbish — rubbish — rubbish’ (*TS* 10). Olga’s inner life, her longing for ‘Moscow’, is rubbished and the play constantly circles back to these thoughts. It is not until the end of the play that the lives of the sisters, totally changed, are graced with a balance between hope and acceptance.

Through such alterations, and performing against their socio-historical backdrop, Friel’s three sisters offer a resemblance to the organisation in Ireland that became known as ‘Women for Peace.’ Olga’s repeated phrase (like Irina’s repeated call to ‘work’ and Masha’s ‘green oak’ quotation) functions as an expression of inner life struggling to make connection or an understanding of life in general. In Friel’s Act Four, as in Act One, this fragile affirmation of hope separates the three sisters positively from the negative energies which Chebutykin represents. It is clear that the three sisters have relinquished their dream (illusion) of Moscow (peace?) but that they ‘are going to go on living!’ (*TS* 114).

In *Uncle Vanya* the same sense of fragile hope and ambiguity informs Sonya’s final ‘aria’, concluding with the promise ‘*My otдохnem! My otдохnem!*’ (‘we shall rest, we shall rest’<sup>18</sup>). Like Olga’s repeated ‘if we only knew’, such phrases raise questions without the



prospect of answers. And while this is wholly typical of Chekhov's vision, consistently observing the pain and confusion of unrealised hopes and love, Friel re-accentuates this for Irish audiences. Against Chebutykin's cynicism, Irina insists that endeavour can effect change and make life meaningful so that Olga's comment, 'it almost seems as if it is about to be revealed very soon why we are alive and what our suffering is for' (*TS* 114), resonates with hope. A comparison of Olga's speech with the texts Friel consulted shows how his minor alterations reconstrue Chekhov's dialogue so that the plaint for possibilities of change, for 'peace', 'content' and 'happiness' becomes more pronounced than in those he consulted.<sup>19</sup>

Elisaveta Fen translates Olga's speech as:

How cheerfully and jauntily that band's playing - really I feel as if I wanted to live! ... but our sufferings may mean happiness for the people who come after us ... The band is playing so cheerfully and joyfully - maybe, if we wait a little longer, we shall find out why we live, why we suffer. ... Oh, if we only knew, if only we knew!<sup>20</sup>

This is less literal and less wooden than the equivalent in Constance Garnett:

The music is so gay, so confident, and one longs for life! ... but our sufferings will pass into joy for those who will live after us, happiness and peace will be established upon earth ... The music is so gay, so joyful, and it seems as though a little more and we shall know what we are living for, why we are suffering ... If we only knew, if we only knew!<sup>21</sup>

Ronald Hingley's more recent translation is less formal again than either of the above and yet he retains the Biblical and lyrical repetitions of the original which idiomatically signal that Chekhov's dialogue is not naturalistic:

Listen to the band. What a splendid, rousing tune, it puts new heart into you, doesn't it? Oh, my God! In time we shall pass on for ever and be forgotten. Our faces will be forgotten and our voices and how many of us there were. But our sufferings will bring happiness to those who come after us, *peace and joy will reign on earth*, and there will be kind words and kind thoughts for us and our times. We still have our lives ahead of us, my dears, so let's make the most of them. The band's playing such cheerful, happy music, it feels as if we might find out before long what our lives and sufferings are for. *If we could only know! If we could only know!*<sup>22</sup>

Different again, Ann Dunnigan translates Olga's speech as:

The music plays so gaily, so valiantly, one wants to live! ... but our sufferings will turn into joy for those who live after us, happiness and peace will come to this earth, and then they will remember kindly and bless those who are living now. Oh, my dear sisters, our life is not over yet. We shall live! The music is so gay, so joyous, it seems as if just a little more and we shall know why we live, why we suffer. ... If only we knew, if only we knew!<sup>23</sup>

When Friel's Olga says, 'our unhappiness, our suffering, won't be wasted. They're preliminary to better times, and because of them the people who come after us will inherit a better life - a life of peace and content and happiness' (TS 114), she speaks directly to the situation in the North of Ireland in the 1980s, a predicament, for many, devoid of 'peace' and 'content.' Thus, Friel's text presents his translation credentials. The confusion and self-delusion of Friel's characters belong originally to Chekhov's. But once their plight is related to and refracted through Friel's Northern Ireland idiom and context, Chekhov's enquiry, once again, presses its audiences into communication. And while analysis cannot be restricted to single words (since literary production, and perhaps drama even more so, involve the transformation of determinate linguistic materials into more complex discursive structures) such alterations reveal that Friel's translation is contextually re-sited so that its orientation, communicative enquiry, is made provocatively obvious and vital in performance.

In this regard, and almost without exception, critics of Friel's translation and the Field Day's production have failed to address these alterations and the intention behind them. Their common complaint is one of prolixity. But their analysis of the translation's form, and its technical production, do not identify its *raison d'être* in relation to the surrounding socio-political context. When critics ask, 'Why bother?', they betray a lack of appropriate critical infrastructure and demonstrate why the majority of the critics, many of whom enthused over *Translations*, have failed to acknowledge not only the paradox of translation but also that of the classic — that there is no single way to interpret or describe the complex cognitive, ethical and aesthetic relations which exist between author, audience and artwork, and that the classic remains vital because of its capacity to be re-read.

It is precisely because Friel recognises these factors that he contextualises Chekhov's insights into human behaviour in the Northern Ireland vernacular, but without re-positioning the play (as one critic suggested) 'lock, stock and samovar' to Ireland. Nor has he, as Michael Coveney acknowledges,<sup>24</sup> staged *Three Sisters* as a drama of occupation which, under the circumstances, would have made a dramatic but inflammatory impact. (The play was premiered in the fortified Guildhall, Derry).<sup>25</sup>

Friel re-created Chekhov's *Three Sisters* to engender *hope* in the face of surrounding despair. The alterations (examined above) are minimal but totally in keeping with the hopeful, uplifting spirit of Chekhov. Friel's rephrasing becomes particularly pointed, however, addressing his audiences before they turn and contemplate the significance of the tableau of the three remaining males, the sad, apologetic Kulygin, the pathetic, perambulating Andrey and the cynical, parasitical Chebutykin. It is because none of these males inspires

hope for change that Friel's alterations to the dialogue of the three sisters, by contrast, mark the women in the play as the source of possible future growth.<sup>26</sup>

#### iv critics

Field Day's production of *Three Sisters* played in fifteen towns both North and South and received mixed reviews.<sup>27</sup> Of the Derry première Desmond Rushe commented that *Three Sisters* 'is a universal and timeless play of imperishable beauty [requiring] no colloquialism slant to enhance its level of acceptability.'<sup>28</sup> Rushe went on to state that 'Friel's vernacular is often so localised that it threatens to become irritatingly intrusive, and to detract from the immense subtleties of Chekhov's creative approach.' Yet, apparently deaf to the reasoning behind Friel's idiomatic visibility, and to his own inconsistencies, Rushe praised Stephen Rea's production as 'lovingly faithful to the original in its concentrated essence', and commented that the dialogue was given 'an idiomatic flavour which is unmistakably Irish' before concluding without explanation, that this was not 'as rewarding an idea as it may superficially seem to be.' The critic, like Chekhov, recognised that the play is too long. But Rushe does not specify how or why the vernacular, in his opinion, did not work, nor why Rea's direction '[did] not quite rise to the formidable challenge Chekhov poses in all his plays.' Rushe simply calls upon the actors 'to inject a greater degree of inner intensity into their performances' and 'to use a more neutralised form of speech.' Rushe's comments regarding accent echo those he made about *Translations* and, as such, reflect a contextual deficit rather than constituting an evaluation of the translation or analysis of the production. Such comments, patronising and perplexing, are, in fact, symptomatic, coming from one who describes Chekhov as 'sublime' and Friel as 'our greatest living playwright' without offering any comment on the possible synthesis and departures effected by Friel. It is worth noting that Rushe, writing for the *Irish Independent*, finds no analogy between the stasis and decay of Chekhov's provincial 'backwater' garrison town and the mood swings and longings of his characters, and the Irish situation which prevailed in the 1980s.

By contrast, the *Belfast Newsletter* critic, John Keyes, alert to Friel's intention and method, stated that 'an Irish company and dialogue ... does not make the play an Irish play.' But he expanded that Field Day, by placing no limits on our expectations for change, offered a translation that was

the interpretation of one major playwright by another ... a spiritual, a cultural translation, ... to enlarge our understanding of Russian mores by making us recognise those which we share with them and by exhibiting those aspects of mankind which remain universal and unchanged by time or place.<sup>29</sup>

Keyes contextualised the influence of Chekhov in the modern theatre and aligned Friel with this, linking them through a play which he perceived as ‘concerned with the destruction of illusions and the process of destruction by disintegration.’ Keyes’s response was echoed by the critic for the *Dungannon Observer* who stated that Friel, ‘in conveying ... the essence and significance of Chekhov’s vision, illuminates for us the complexities and confusions of life in Ireland to-day’ and praised the production’s balance of sympathetic involvement and comic detachment.<sup>30</sup> Much less incisive, Martin O’Brien of the *Belfast Telegraph* described Friel’s translation as conveying the ‘essence’ of the ‘original’ but left this unsubstantiated and proceeded instead to offer a hackneyed synopsis of the play thereby undercutting the praise offered.<sup>31</sup> Ulick O’Connor also offered a synopsis of the play and related this to Friel’s translation, stating that its themes of non-communication and confusion supplied Friel with ample reason for making a version of *Three Sisters* in the vernacular, making mention of Friel’s alterations and affirming the playwright’s intention as both philosophical and political since the existing translations were indeed ‘Bloomsbury’ or ‘Edwardian.’<sup>32</sup> Under the telling heading, ‘Not a “Translation” in the Accepted Sense’, Diane Herron of the *Londonderry Sentinel*, like Con Houlihan of the *Evening Press*, described the enterprise as ‘patronising.’<sup>33</sup> Herron revealed her particular aesthetic stance by asking, ‘are we next to have the beauty of Shakespeare’s language translated into Irish phrases and repeated in various blends of an Irish brogue?’<sup>34</sup> Herron’s endorsement of orthodoxy was repeated by Colm Cronin, writing for the *Sunday Tribune*. In his ‘humble opinion’, Cronin ventured that Friel’s translation ‘didn’t do much for Chekhov’s original which hardly needed to be clarified or made more relevant for Irish audiences by being colloquialised to a degree that was more laughable than comic at times.’<sup>35</sup> Like Herron and Houlihan, Cronin makes no distinction between the translation and the production and, therefore, unlike Keyes, does not speculate as to the possible reasons for Friel’s use of the vernacular. More alert to the relevance of Chekhov’s play, the *Sunday News* critic acknowledged Friel’s *Three Sisters* as ‘a weighty play, laden with a heavy cargo of developments and reflections ... posing philosophical questions as to the meaning of life, the cause of suffering and the prospects of happier times’, commenting that ‘most of the situations are still familiar to us ... and, as today, a huge question hangs over the role of work in our lives, as over the role of learning that cannot be applied.’ The critic suggested that ‘whether or not Friel has succeeded in making the experience “more” accessible would require careful comparison with other versions’ but added that, ‘accessible it certainly is, conveying the lovely story with a great deal of poetry and a great deal of power. The lines are not remarkably Irish or even Synge, and only one part is peppered with Irish expressions.’ According to the *Sunday News* critic, ‘the variety of Irish accents did seem to funnel the

feelings expressly for Irish ears and the device certainly did not remove from or flatten the Russian perspective.’ Like Rushe, Herron and Cronin, the *Sunday News* reviewer found the play long. However, their common ground ends here. Both in method and findings (commenting separately on the translation and the production), the *Sunday News* reviewer offers a response totally different to that of Rushe, Herron and Cronin and more in line with Keyes.<sup>36</sup> Michael Coveney, ‘checking Friel’s translation against the Penguin Classic’, praised it as ‘a beautifully clear, fresh text, perhaps even longer than the original’ and proceeded to justify his remarks. Coveney described the playing as ‘too much bombastic declamation’, relating this overstatement in the delivery to the production’s ‘presentational control’ which, for him, was ‘disastrously slack’ and concluding that ‘Friel’s speakable lines, full of ... fluid phrases’ warranted more than what was, ‘for the most part, a stilted and painstaking performance.’<sup>37</sup>

The above critics, in the main, indicate that critical response focussed on the production. While some considered the translation (comparing it against established English versions) none of the above critics focused upon its context, in particular, the potential analogies or the significance of its idiomatic appeal to contemporary Irish audiences or its theatrical efficiency.

By and large, when it was addressed, (as by Coveney and O’Connor) Friel’s translation was better received than the actual production. Several critics, notably David Nolan, Noeleen Dowling and the reviewer for the *Sunday Journal*, complained about a lack of direction and an unevenness and lack of subtlety in the acting without actually offering specific grounds.<sup>38</sup> The influential, RTE daily radio commentator and host of the widely popular ‘Late, Late Show’, stated, ‘It’s one of the few occasions at a theatre when I’ve actually heard a man snoring loudly, until eventually a woman had to thump him awake. The rest of us felt she should have left him in peace and we could have joined him.’<sup>39</sup> Byrne’s review failed to perceive or engage with the dynamics behind Friel’s translation. Overall a survey of such reviewers’ comments reveals a lack of discernment between personal opinion and informed reviewing, neglecting to distinguish between the translation, its author’s aim, and the production in performance. Stephen Rea has commented that ‘in places of no theatrical sophistication, the audience liked it. They simply followed the story. In some cases they hadn’t seen a play for thirty years. But in centres of theatrical pretension, we were criticised for “tampering with the classics”.’<sup>40</sup> Rea’s comment points to a truth. Chekhov’s work has been enshrined as inviolable by the English theatrical tradition and its colonial adherents. But, equally, every year brings a re-reading of such works because they continue to offer

insights into the human condition. Moreover, in the 1981 Dublin Theatre Festival, Irish plays and the issue of self-locution were, as Irving Wardle noted, strongly featured.<sup>41</sup> Yet despite this observation, Wardle found Friel's *Three Sisters* and Field Day's production of it 'coarsely reductive', citing it as 'a crashing disappointment from the group that created *Translations*.' Wardle then commented, 'there are plenty of good lines', but proceeded to list the localisations that he castigates as 'reductive.' Like Herron, Wardle insists that 'Chekhov needs no special papers to take up Irish residence. He can be at home there in a "standard" [English] translation.' 'Friel's mistake', Wardle suggests, 'is to offer a half-nationalized text, still Russian in its names and social rituals, but sprinkled with Edwardian songs and plonkingly underlined local references' and he concludes that Rea's production is 'the most insensitive I have seen since the Actors' Studio impaled themselves on *Three Sisters*.' Nevertheless, like Coveney, and almost despite his reservations, Wardle positively identifies several of Friel's alterations, especially to Chebutykin. Both critics praise Friel's addition of the mirror episode in Act Three (*TS* 72-73) and the improvised dance by the young people around Chebutykin in Act Two (*TS* 60). At such moments, Coveney comments, Friel's 'marvellous ear obliterates the strain of most English versions' and Wardle describes these same incidents as, 'a genuine addition to the Chekhov heritage.' But neither Wardle or Coveney relates such alterations to Friel's intention, re-reading Chekhov's enquiry in his own idiom, nor do they acknowledge that the Russian play's interrogation of the plurality of words and meaning, is the same endless enquiry of *Translations* against which they purport to measure Friel's *Three Sisters*.

Apart from John Keyes, none of the critics directly related Friel's translation or Rea's production of it to the analogies which are apparent between Chekhov's enquiry into change and his vision of unrealised hopes, and the situation in Northern Ireland. Nor did any find an echo of Friel's Ballybeg in Chekhov's provincial town. No analogy was drawn by either the popular critics or the academics between Chekhov's garrison town and that of Derry in the 1980s. Instead, many harped back to *Translations* but without recognising how the demise of Athens and Carthage might relate to the fossilised Baile Beag. As indicated in Chapter Two, many southern Irish and some English critics, together with some Northern academics, erroneously promulgated the view that, with *Translations*, Friel was recording history. Just as many failed to analyse the anachronisms embedded provocatively in *Translations*, similarly they did not consider any analogy between Chekhov's and Friel's political 'capitals' and the folly of looking to such centres for 'rescue'. This suggests that the reviews were coloured by preconceived expectations regarding Field Day. They were more subjective than

critical, reflecting a lack of comment upon Friel's actual translation, its context and constraints or the possibilities of such a rewriting. Given a pronounced Northern accent, Friel's version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, unapologetically focused Irish attention upon the need for revivifying change and self-determination.

v 'a Moscow that exists only in fiction and in our feverish imagination, a city of peace with no banners, no slogans, no red bunting' (Gershkovich)

Equally innovative but more audacious than Friel's and Field Day's 'tinkering with the classics' was a pre-Perestroika production of *Three Sisters* directed by Yuri P. Lyubimov<sup>42</sup> at the Taganka theatre in Moscow, in October, 1981 - the same year as that of Friel. An account of this production by Alexander Gershkovich, comparing it to a pre-war Moscow production 'almost in its original Arts Theatre form', reinforces not only the validity of re-writings and competing interpretations but also supports my thesis, arguing for re-invigorated communication.<sup>43</sup> A consideration of this production is worthwhile and pertinent to the Field Day venture.

In Alexander Gershkovich's account, he initially recollects his youthful response to 'the heart-rending, dreamy exclamation of Olga as the curtain fell: "If only we could know, if only we could know!"' and comments, 'we were all sincerely sorry for the three sisters who longed to escape to Moscow.' Gershkovich then describes the totally different experience and impact of the same words some forty years later. Under Lyubimov's direction he found that Olga's closing lines were turned into a series of probing questions, spoken in 'slightly mocking and sceptical tone[s]': '... our sufferings will turn to joy for those who live after us (?). Happiness and peace will dwell on earth (?), and people living now will be blessed and well spoken of (?).' Gershkovich comments that the theatre, which 'naturally gives no single answer ... puts to us these "accursed" questions of Russian life and forces us to think about them.' He continues that, 'in this austere [Lyubimov] un-Chekhovian production, into the theatre of the 1980s, Chekhov's words are allowed to fall with sarcasm, not false comfort.'

Gershkovich described how the production closed with a military band and regiment leaving a provincial town and the three sisters coming out onto the forestage. 'And now at a certain moment, to the right of the unsuspecting audience, as yet unaware of the constructional capabilities of the new auditorium, a wall begins to slide smoothly away. It opens out on to the street, on to the Garden Ring - the route circling the historic centre of Moscow.' The view offered is the fairytale city and hub of the three sisters' desires and the retreating shapes of soldiers in their tsarist uniforms. Gershkovich makes the point that in

spite of the contradictory style of the production, and perhaps even as a consequence of the contrast it provides to its idyllic opening, the production gives a clear sense of the impractical dreams of Chekhov's characters. Gershkovich describes how, after Irina's last speech: 'a time will come when people will understand what it was all for, what the purpose was of all this suffering ...', the wall panel again moved and another view of Moscow, 'plunged into the dusk,' was given to which he responds:

And you suddenly understand why the theatre has decided to stage this old hackneyed Chekhov play in modern Moscow, which is so un-Chekhovian ... And you see the military band with different eyes as its brass and drums thunder out so loudly with such mind-numbing cheerfulness. While it plays a whole platoon of soldiers comes on stage and silent young men in long grey military coats mask our view of real-life Moscow by holding up enormous shields like mirrors with dim reflections in them. In the shields the audience suddenly catches sight of its own enormous and slightly distorted reflection. And then we may involuntarily compare the gloomy Moscow where we now live, work, love, struggle and dream with that "old print" of a Moscow now forgotten which excited us at the very beginning of the play. With a Moscow that exists only in fiction and in our feverish imagination, a city of peace with no banners, no slogans, no red bunting, a Moscow washed clean by showers of rain between sunny intervals, with its gold-domed church on a distant hill, calmly waiting for something to happen.

Gershkovich describes the Taganka *Three Sisters* as a production that was 'tough and masculine, military', and comments that the 'cosily domestic studio atmosphere of the old Taganka theatre ... vanished.' Replacing this was 'the feeling of a theatre that [was] official and formal ... *Three Sisters*, then, is in the new Taganka theatre.' Gershkovich comments further,

the all-powerful theatre, having enticed us into the world of starry-eyed dreams, does not share our sympathy for Chekhov's heroines and makes no attempt to satisfy our bucolic tastes. In harsh contrast to the emotional introduction to the play the theatre presents us with a dry, heartless, emphatically rationalist action as an illustration of the naked proposition of Chekhovian drama - a drama that is timeless and simultaneously relevant to the barrack-like discipline of Russia, the drama of the estrangement and causeless hostility that exists between human beings.

Clearly, Lyubimov's use of the military, particularly the use of the riot shields to engage audiences in actual reflections about changes, registered with Gershkovich. When Gershkovich talks of 'barrack-like discipline' and a drama of the estrangement and hostility between beings, he might well have been describing Derry or indeed the North. His comments then, have been included, for obvious reasons.

It is interesting that in this production, Gershkovich finds that 'Solyony becomes the mainspring of the action. [Solyony's] aggressiveness, his loutishness, his demonstration of



naked force, expresses the basic idea of Lyubimov's production.' Judging from the critical response to Friel's dramatic representation of the military in *Translations*, had he adapted a Lyubimov approach towards any of Chekhov's soldiers, Friel's translation would have been dismissed outright as anti-British forces propaganda. As it was, he softened the military personnel (emasculating some) and did not focus upon the malevolent Solyony but concentrated more upon the roles of Natasha and Chebutykin, and the three sisters and their brother. These were the negative and inactive energies through which he examined the dynamics of estrangement and hostility.

#### vi a play of analogies

*Three Sisters* documents personal and socio-political stagnation and suffering. All of the characters, and particularly the three sisters and the soldiers, Vershinin and Tusenbach, are displaced persons looking for pattern and meaning in their lives. The search of Chekhov's characters to find some rationale for their suffering accords well with Friel's and Field Day's declaration to perform plays that could contribute critical awareness of the inadequacy and impotence of the prevailing order.<sup>44</sup> In 1981, after a decade of internecine violence in Northern Ireland, this play, depicting characters yearning after a life elsewhere and for peace, is likely to have struck a tragically pertinent chord with Friel's audiences, North and South. It is this sense of tragic analogy, and Chekhov's insight into human weakness, that make it worth translating such a play into a contemporary idiom.<sup>45</sup> Friel's intention was to rewrite established translations in such a way as to interrogate Irish reality and coincidentally challenge the superior English interpretative status of established translations. In this context, Robert Tracy finds that British productions have liberally altered *Three Sisters* 'to make Chekhov succeed with British audiences' and he points out that towards this end Komisarjevsky and other directors have romanticised Chekhov's characters.<sup>46</sup>

By contrast, Friel adheres to Chekhov's construction of characterisation, time and settings. He uses Irish idiolects and dialects to reveal critical stances towards individuals, groups and their hopes and, by analogy, the contemporary Irish situation. In performance, Friel's reconstitution of Chekhov is incisive in several roles where single words or phrases are altered in order to contest what he considers to be the commodification of representation and reified English interpretation.

Minor alterations to the dialogue of two characters in particular contribute to this endeavour. Friel intensifies the vulgarity of Chekhov's Natasha and increases the apathy of Chekhov's Chebutykin. It is as though he uses a surfeit of these two negative energies to

reflect and contest the prevailing socio-political divisions, and to promote possibilities of change. Natasha and Chebutykin are totally self-absorbed. What they say is rarely what they mean. Self-interest dominates so that their actions invariably diminish the efforts of others.

Chekhov's Natasha is socially on a par with the Prozorovs (in so far as she has married into their midst) but lacks the quality of *intelligentnost'* which characterises the three sisters.<sup>47</sup> Like Chekhov's, Friel's Natasha insists upon flaunting her limited knowledge of French in an attempt to increase her social status. But Friel's Natasha is lower in social status and her language, thick with colloquialisms, confirms this. Ironically she admits to being 'an eejit' (*TS* 36), 'thick as poundies' (*TS* 71) but swears that Baby Bobik is the 'stuffa genius.' When Natasha is unexpectedly interrupted by Kulygin (who explains that Chebutykin is 'footless') she exclaims, 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph! You put the heart across me!' (*TS* 111). She refers to Andrey's uncontrollable sobbing as a 'racket' that will waken her 'wane', and to Anfisa as an 'old bag' fit for no useful service, declaring that the carnival has the servants 'astray in the head altogether' (*TS* 38).

Nuala Hayes, the actor who played Natasha, found that audiences responded because, as she states, 'Friel's translation locates the play better, making it a more "social play"'.<sup>48</sup> In Act Three, for example, when Natasha has almost completed her expulsion of the three sisters, she threatens to 'evict'<sup>49</sup> Anfisa, an elderly servant and a remnant of the old order which, in effect, Natasha intends to oust. Chekhov's Natasha says, '*Ni k chemu ona tut. Ona krest'ianka, dolzhna v derevne zhit*',<sup>50</sup> ('she is of no use here. She is a peasant, should be living in the village'). This statement completely contradicts her early comment about the privileged giving assistance to the needy. Friel's Natasha is even less subtle and exclaims, 'She's no use any more. She's a peasant and that's where she belongs - out in the bogs' (*TS* 70). With the use of the word 'bogs', where other translations simply use 'country' or 'village', Friel underlines the harsh local reality and voices the age-old division between rural and urban Ireland.

Eileen Pollock (who played Masha) also confirmed 'an increased sense of access and response from audiences', stating that whilst 'it is not an Irish play', Friel's translation 'brings it into the understanding of an Irish actor' and that, consequently, it 'is better than the others at extracting the humanity of the situation, tragedy and all, with a ripple of humour', a comment wholly indicative of Chekhovian irony but also reminiscent of O'Casey. Similarly, Sorchá Cusack (who played Olga) and Olwen Fouere (who played Irina) praised Friel's use of idiom and vernacular to structure and localise the paradoxes of Chekhov.

The use of words such as ‘bog’, ‘wane’ and ‘footless’ highlight Friel’s heightened idiom. These are not stage-Irishisms. They are the Irish ebullient equivalent of Chekhov’s equally unrestrained Russians as identified by Valentina Ryapolova.<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, Friel alters Chekhov’s text to echo the Irish literary tradition. For example, where Chekhov’s Andrei complains: ‘*ni odnogo podvizhnika ni v proshlom, ni v nastoiashchem, ni odnogo uchenogo, ni odnogo khudozhnika ...*’<sup>52</sup> [not one religious zealot neither in the past or in the present, not one scholar, not one artist], Friel alters this so that it becomes a deliberate echo of Joyce’s ‘Land of Saints and Scholars’: ‘not one saint, not one scholar, not one artist’ (*TS* 103). Thus Chekhov’s Andrei’s suggestion that their town is something of a cultural backwater by comparison with Moscow is rephrased to echo Gabriel Conroy’s complaint and preference for European manners and taste. More pointedly, Friel’s Andrey describes their life in the provinces as a ‘charade’ into which ‘children are born with their own hopes and their own dreams and then in time succumb like the rest of us to this living death, become spectres like the rest of us’ (*TS* 103). Friel builds this to a carnivalesque song and dance routine.

The origins of this routine begin with Chekhov’s Chebutykin’s newspaper item disclosing that ‘Balzac was married in Berdichev’, a small Russian town (akin to Friel’s Baile Beag) far from the metropolis. The newspaper item, apparently unrelated to the previous dialogue, is simply announced. But it serves in mock counterpoint to the Prozorovs’ ceaseless talk and thoughts of Moscow and implies, as David Magarshack rightly comments, that one does not need to ‘seek happiness in Moscow seeing that one of the greatest writers of France found it in Berdichev.’<sup>53</sup> Friel endorses this Chekhovian insight, expanding it so that Irina, Fedotik and Roddey join Tusenbach and actually dance around Chebutykin. The stage directions indicate:

[Pause] There is a sense that this moment could blossom, an expectancy that suddenly everybody might join in the chorus - and dance - and that the room might be quickened with music and laughter. Everyone is alert to this expectation; it is almost palpable, if some means of realising it could be found. Vershinin moves close to Masha. If the moment blossoms, they will certainly dance. Fedotik moves close to Irina (to Roddey’s acute annoyance) they, too, will dance. Tusenbach sits at the piano ... picking out the melody. ... [He] is all thumbs - the melody is drowned.<sup>54</sup>

The moment does not blossom. Tusenbach, indicating that he cannot play by ‘ear’, says ‘I’m lost. I need music. I can’t play without music’ (*TS* 50). His statement echoes Chekhov in kind but the invention is Friel’s and he makes it symptomatic of the hunger for structure and order in the surrounding communities in the North of Ireland, economically depressed and in severe

civil strife. Thus, with minimal alteration to Chekhov's words, Friel achieves impact through a genuine correspondence of circumstance, feeling and language.

Friel's invention has its origins in Chekhov's debate over the role of work in our lives and education or learning that cannot be applied. This is encapsulated at the outset when Chebutykin talks about extracting 'profound information' from the newspapers and reads out the name Nikolai Dobrolyubov and states that he does not know or does not care what Dobrolyubov 'criticises.' Chebutykin's ignorance and lack of engagement (like that of Mariya Vasilyevna and Serebriakov in *Uncle Vanya*) threaten to infect (or ironically undercut) the subsequent philosophising by Tusenbach about the purpose of life. However, because it is Chebutykin's and not Vershinin's endorsement, the likelihood of happiness seems all the more tenuous because of his own cynicism.

Friel's both extends and dilutes his debate through movement, music and carnivalesque humour. In this short invented dance sequence he raises the underlying delusions and the sexual tensions between Masha and Vershinin, between Fedotik and Roddey, between Irina and Tusenbach, and between Irina and her own unfulfilled desire. Ten years later Friel expands this device making visible the thwarted passions of the five Mundy sisters in *Dancing at Lughnasa* where, as in *Three Sisters*, song and dance visually express the mismatch between desire and sexual-cum-social roles.<sup>55</sup> *Dancing at Lughnasa*, celebrating the resilience of the human spirit, happens because of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. From Chekhov Friel learnt how to express the near eruption of emotion and desire. He translated it into motion since movement is the expression of life but a celebration that can be prohibited by negative energies like Kate Mundy or Natasha.

As indicated earlier, Irving Wardle praised this incident as 'a genuine addition to the Chekhov heritage' but described the production overall as a 'coarsely reductive exercise in Irish Chekhov.'<sup>56</sup> Wardle also complained that the tempo disallowed the humming of Irina's spinning top and that Natasha's 'Lady Macbeth' entrance was reduced to sticking her head round the door. This truncated effect was calculated to increase the sense of dramatic exigency and its analogy in the contemporary situation. Rea had in fact reduced the Derry playing time of four hours down to three for the Dublin production. Wardle actually describes Nuala Hayes's Natasha as 'a greedy vulgarian' and compares James Ellis's Vershinin to O'Casey's Captain Boyle, yet he gives neither Friel nor Field Day any credit for what was, in performance, obvious to him; that is, Chekhov in an Irish idiom, and not, as he complained, in 'a standard translation'!<sup>57</sup>

When Wardle states ‘if one thing is clear from the Yeatsian policy statement of Field Day ... it is a determination not to play down to the audience’, he reveals both an error in critical judgement and a common assumption. In aligning Field Day with Yeats, and Chekhov with ‘standard translations’, Wardle endorses the cultural elitism that Friel, Rea and Field Day contest. Instead of judging their intention and achievement on its merits, Wardle comments on what the production is not. It is neither ‘totally Irish [like] Thomas Kilroy’s version of *The Seagull*’ nor ‘a standard translation.’ Thus, by default, Wardle admits that Friel’s translation is something else — it is different. Wardle’s critique, like the Abbey’s decision in 1983 to use Michael Frayn’s translation of *Three Sisters*, ignored Friel’s and Field Day’s aesthetic and diachronic intention. Friel’s translation and characterisation (as Nuala Hayes points out) allude to other Irish plays. Friel’s version refers to but interrogates that tradition while also referring to the situation at hand. Basically, Friel’s alterations and use of idiom articulate the relationship between the situation and the tradition, and endorse a multiplicity of codes, thereby making a nonsense of the notion of a definitive or ‘standard’ translation, as proposed by critics like Wardle or the Abbey management. In doing so, Friel implicitly challenges the meaning and values inscribed within contemporary representation.

The critical response of these two authorities, both influential, confirms that while a work may enlarge the circle of communication, first it has to be performed and even then audience recognition of the work is an unpredictable event. In performance, there can be no standard text because interpretation and response are translations which commence with the long line of director, actor, stage management and design and, finally, audience and occasion. What the reviews of Irving Wardle and Desmond Rushe demonstrate is that through critical appropriation of interpretation, the meaning of a text can become as complicated as the issue of authorship. If critics had considered Friel’s reconstitution in the context of his choices and stated intention, keeping this separate from their critique of the actual performance, they might well have produced more incisive enquiries. As they stand, their comments demur about differences. As indicated earlier, Michael Coveney raised similar objections but, virtually alone among the critics surveyed, he then proceeded to identify and indeed praised specific re-writing strategies effected by Friel. In particular, he focused upon alterations to Natasha and, particularly, Chebutykin’s mirror speech in Act Three.

With Act Three, the dynamics of disintegration and eviction become tangible. The elderly servant, Anfisa, commenting upon the misfortune of those who have lost their homes in the town fire, pleads not to be sent away. Anfisa’s plea for shelter functions like an echo-chamber in the subsequent dialogue between Olga and Natasha. Chekhov’s Natasha states

‘they’re saying we ought to start a subscription in aid of the victims of the fire ... . In any case it’s up to us to help the poor as best we can’ (TS 69) and immediately turns her attention to her own children<sup>58</sup>. Friel’s Natasha, in words reminiscent of the bombings and burnt-out homes of the 1980s in the North, states, ‘they’re talking about setting up a relief committee for the families that have lost their homes. I’m all for that. One must always be ready to help the underprivileged. Shouldn’t one?’ (TS 69). The stage directions indicate ‘she studies herself in the mirror’ and simultaneously she continues, ‘I mean to say, if the privileged classes don’t undertake their civic responsibilities, I mean to say, who will?’ (TS 69). It is as though Natasha is talking to her ‘other’ that defines her as one of the privileged, capable of giving assistance. But Friel’s Natasha is, like Chebutykin, a parasitical spirit, an alignment highlighted upon his next entrance.

Chekhov’s Chebutykin has not been near the fire but, like another Pilate, he enters, washes his hands and appears simply to talk to himself. Friel, in a moment of pure invention, has Chebutykin, like Natasha, enter and encounter a mirror image. Chebutykin’s reflection, like the cracked mirror in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, functions as an index of the split self.

In the Chekhov text, this sense of alienation and Chebutykin’s painful awareness of the hollowness of his life are spread across two speeches. In the first he weeps, ‘oh, if only I could simply stop existing’ and he uses the recollection of the death of a young female patient as an excuse for his drunkenness. In this soliloquy, Chekhov’s Chebutykin appears to be caught in a moment of *vnenakhaodimost*, or ‘outsideness’; exotopy spatial and temporal. Finding himself to be nothing more than the construct of others, he weeps and says, ‘I used to know a thing or two twenty-five years ago, but now I don’t remember anything.’ Subsequently, while Vershinin, Tusenbach and Irina talk about leaving, Chekhov’s Chebutykin examines the clock (given to him by the Prozorov’s deceased mother whom he loved) and, as though intent upon halting the inertia of a life measured by it, or to stop any further change, he drops it. Friel’s Chebutykin says, ‘Smashed to smithereens’ (TS 75) and his gesture, like a moment of madness, is met with embarrassment and non-response.

Provocatively paraphrasing the absurdity of his life, Chebutykin says (according to Fen’s translation), ‘perhaps I didn’t smash it. Perhaps it only appears that I did. Perhaps it only appears to us that we exist, whereas in reality we don’t exist at all. I don’t know anything, no one knows anything.’<sup>59</sup> Where Fen uses ‘I’, Friel uses the inclusive pronoun ‘we’, as in the original, so that all present are entangled in this moment of absurd revelation (TS 75). Chebutykin goes to leave but stops and announces that Natasha is having an affair with Protopopov. Again, no-one responds. He begins to sing, ‘breaks off, stares briefly at them

*and leaves.*' Chebutykin's statement is not overtly developed. But, when Vershinin repeats the song line, 'Waiting at the church!', '*shakes his head slowly*' and says, 'It has been a strange day ...' (TS 75), it is as though Vershinin's own marriage and emotional repressions surface momentarily because in the next breath he refers to his children and wife and shortly thereafter Masha enters. But, by their apparent non-response, the characters present allow Chebutykin's outburst to function in at least two ways. They have 'read between the lines' and know all about the invisible but ever-present Protopopov. Thus Chebutykin's statement and the characters' non-response to it highlight the absurd, bizarre play of surfaces and silences which passes for interaction in this household, and the doctor's outburst also emphasises the fact that Natasha intends to make changes — they are all to leave. This second outburst by Chebutykin conflates the two structural kernels of this play; the new order will expel the old, and the age-old anecdote of the deceived husband raises its head. The whole episode is of course open to several interpretations, and one is that the pretence and inertia will continue. There is the suggestion of this possibility at the end of the play when Natasha's expulsion of the Prozorovs is complete, and to the beat of military music, the soldiers march off to another engagement, leaving the sisters to continue life as they will. This is why, as I have argued, Friel's minimal alterations to Olga's speech are so important, given the socio-political context of this production.

Chekhov uses these two speeches, Chebutykin's soliloquy and his clock speech, to orchestrate a brooding build-up and eruption of the doctor's self-disgust and despair. But, just as Friel intensifies the harshness and selfishness of Natasha, so too he sharpens the mood swings and false ethics of Chebutykin in these two speeches, creating a sort of explosion which malevolently impacts on the bystanders.

Whereas in the first mirror speech, Friel replaces the 'I' with 'you', in the second speech he uses 'we' so that the audience is implicated in the hollowness of Chebutykin's life, '*une absence d'oeuvre*,' and this alteration gives the whole incident an intense dialectic dynamic. Addressing his mirror reflection, Friel's doctor says:

And to hell with you specifically, my friend. You know why you're drunk, don't you. Course you do. We both know. ... Because your diagnosis was incorrect and the lady died, my friend. You killed her. ... [He touches his reflection with his finger tip]. Maybe you're the reality. Why not? Maybe this [body] is the image. Maybe this hasn't arms and legs and a head at all. Maybe this has no existence ... just pretends to exist ... just pretends to walk about and eat and sleep ... I wish that was true. I wish you (reflection) were the reality, my friend, I wish - oh God, how I wish this [body] didn't exist ... [He cries. Then suddenly] What the hell do I care? That conversation in the club the other day [to mirror] - remember? Eh-eh-eh? All about Shakespeare and Voltaire. I know

you - you've never read Shakespeare or Voltaire - not a line. Neither had the others. But you all pretended you were experts, didn't you? Experts? Hah! Shysters! Shabby, grubby shysters! And then suddenly you remembered the woman you had killed, all that came back to you then, expert doctor, didn't it? And suddenly you knew what you were - nothing, nothing, nothing. And splendid nothing that you are, what did you do? Went out and got loaded! Oh you are ... magnificent' (TS 72-73).

Friel's Chebutykin begins his morose soliloquy about the mis-diagnosis and the death of a young woman. But, combined with the drinking club incident, his mirror dialogue indicates the gulf which exists between individual social interpretations and polyphonic reality. Here audiences perceive Chebutykin's private sense of self and, as audience, they create a public response to it. Chebutykin's is a dark cameo of life as it is and life as it could be. He recalls the drunken rhetoric of club members who, claiming to have read and understood Shakespeare and Voltaire, thrive on pretence. Through these two incidents, one professional, the other social, Friel castigates not only the ineffectiveness of this doctor but of his own communities to confront their socio-political reality. The antagonism between absurd reality and a rational ideality is wholly Chekhovian and Friel offers this smarting insight to his communities. The hope is that audiences will recognise that in neither his professional nor social situation has Chebutykin acted responsibly. A girl died and pretence prevails. Chebutykin's life, like that of Captain Boyle, Fox Melarkey or Frank Hardy, amounts to a play of lies, of surfaces. For a moment, caught by the mirror, Chebutykin appears to recognise and question this.

A mirror, an obvious symbol of self-perception, was used most effectively by Eugene O'Neill in *A Touch of the Poet* (1957). There, as in Friel's plays, the mirror episode poses the question: which self does the character, Cornelius Melody, see? Friel's Chebutykin is both doctor and audience as he views his reflection. O'Neill's Con Melody, refusing his peasant origins, poses as of Irish gentry stock; in front of his mirror he quotes from *Childe Harold*, insisting that he is among the crowd, but 'not of them', that he is superior to the riffraff around him. In a similar manner, Chebutykin denies that he is but another of the posers in his social club. Both O'Neill's Con Melody and Chekhov's Chebutykin try to escape the reflection and time that indicates their decline.<sup>60</sup>

But if Chekhov's physician fails to heal himself, Friel maximises his doctor's passive negativity. Friel's Chebutykin does not weep, nor is he simply glum like Chekhov's doctor. Despite Irina's constant reference to him as a 'dear, darling dopey doctor', Chebutykin is, in fact, a highly predictable unpredictable character so that like Friel's Natasha, he is given to



sudden, even violent, mood swings. Because of these darker shades, Friel's physician is more frightening than Chekhov's and this is powerfully reflected in the mirror scene.

Whereas Chekhov's doctor talks to thin air, Friel's Chebutykin looks in the mirror at his split self. What he sees is not only himself but his non-self. In the dialogue that occurs between himself and his other, he is numbered among the 'experts' who are, in fact, 'Shysters! Shabby, grubby shysters!' In effect, what Friel does is demonstrate that the subject is no more than an effect of language, that which has learnt to say 'I.' Thus Chebutykin oscillates between identification with the 'I' of utterance and recognition of the difference between the self which speaks and the self which takes its place in the utterance, the self it speaks *of*. Chebutykin's use of the first person succeeds in attaining the position needed to perceive the second, or other Chebutykin, from the outside. Friel emphasises this when he has Chebutykin point to his mirror image and say: 'maybe this has no existence ... just pretends to exist ... I wish that was true. I wish you [reflection] were the reality, my friend, I wish - oh God, how I wish this [body] didn't exist.' Thus Friel conflates two statements and uses two incidents to reveal Chebutykin's ethical and social values and the potentiality of Natasha. Through the simple device of a mirror, Friel shows audiences the behaviour of language, the fundamental I/other split, and thereby promotes an awareness of the relationship between words and social power, language and identity. Surrounded by the three sisters much in the manner that Hugh O'Donnell is surrounded by his pupils, Chebutykin is a central figure. Through him Friel explores alienation and shows us that Chebutykin, like a long line of traditional Irish father-figures, is riddled with nihilistic self-delusion.

Chebutykin's repetition of 'I wish' (*TS* 73) may appear to reflect a desire for change but, in context, more accurately it indicates his mounting despair over his life. At the outset of the play he may be interpreted as 'last year's bird's-nest', an elderly misfit gently mocking the follies and illusions of others. By dubbing himself as an 'old bird' that cannot keep up, he almost appears disarmingly vulnerable. But his passivity and despair, reducing time and purpose to nothing, are summed up in his repeated 'what's the difference.' Such passivity, nihilistically reducing existence itself to 'sweet damn all it matters', must have taken on a charged resonance in an Ireland numbed by a decade of violence.

The joylessness and apathy of Chekhov's doctor are, in fact, reminiscent of Friel's alienated faith healer. Like Chebutykin, Frank Hardy exercised his 'craft', 'a ministry without responsibility', until it was eventually 'undermined by questions' of self doubt (*FH* 333). The healing knowledge of Chekhov's doctor, like Hardy's, is 'gone, gone gone' (*TS*

72). Chebutykin is, in fact, a parasite living off the three sisters, reading newspapers incessantly and finding trivial remedies for trivial complaints. Friel's doctor is another paycock. 'I've never worked' he tells us, 'Never lifted a finger since the day I graduated!' (TS 15). If his ineffectiveness is reflected in the mirror image scene, then tragically it is confirmed when he fails to intervene in the Solyony-Tusenbach duel. Early in Act One he proclaimed, 'I'm an old man, a lonely old man, a kind of useless old man. But if there's anything good about me, it's my love for you three' (TS 18). Yet his utter self-absorption and non-intervention in the duel rob Irina of her future marriage. Friel emphasises this by having Olga tell Irina of Tusenbach's death (TS 112) and this is why, ultimately, it is Olga who poses the stronger and more realistic statement at the end of the play.

Arguably the distance between human potential and the prevailing social reality exists in the tension between the closing two statements of the play, the negative musings of Chebutykin and the questioning of Olga. In Elisaveta Fen's translation, Chebutykin sings, 'I'm sitting on a tomb-di-ay' and, again, reads the paper.<sup>61</sup> Then, giving voice to the cynicism that consumes him, Chekhov has his doctor repeat the phrase, '*Vse ravno! Vse ravno!*'<sup>62</sup>. But Fen's Chebutykin asks 'what does it matter?' and answers, 'Nothing matters!' His despair is as instructive as it is inauthentic; like the Marxist's victim of false consciousness, he rejects his society, attempts to change nothing, chooses to stay and not to march off to new worlds. It is Vershinin who knows that life, replete with struggle, does matter and so leaves, while Chebutykin, the elderly 'cuckoo', remains. Equally solipsistic, Friel's alienated doctor repeats a music hall verse; it is populist, maudlin and subjective, about being left in the lurch at the church. (Irving Wardle admonished Friel for his use of Edwardian songs, disallowing the shallow resonance Friel affects, which is comparable to that of Chekhov.) Chebutykin 'stops abruptly, sits upright and stares in front of him', like a character stranded in a Beckett landscape. Finally and nihilistically he declares that it 'matters sweet damn all ... sweet damn all it matters' (TS 114). But his negativity is deflected; keeping the dialogue open, Olga says 'if we only knew. Oh, if we only knew' (TS 114).

The end of the *Three Sisters* emphasises the waste of lives lived like Chebutykin's — in self-delusion. Chekhov's Chebutykin is a failed *zemstvo* doctor whose lack of engagement robs the possibilities of hope and of social progress. Friel's Chebutykin is more like an addled and ineffective politician; he is more nakedly an unstable variable within the struggle for change. Friel signals this through the responses of the three sisters. Again, this is why it is Olga and not Chebutykin who assumes responsibility and tells Irina that 'the baron has been killed in a duel' (TS 112). And whereas Chekhov's Masha, listening to the departing

military band says, 'one of them's gone for good ... for ever!', Friel's Masha simply says 'they're going away forever. They'll never be back,' which strengthens the inclusive resolve in her next lines, 'we must begin to put *our* lives together again because *we* have got to go on living' (*TS* 113) [my emphasis]. To this Irina adds, 'all this unhappiness, all this suffering – what is it all for?' Friel condenses Olga's speech with stunning effect so that she affirms that their 'suffering won't be wasted' since 'they're a preliminary to ... a life of peace and content and happiness' (*TS* 114). Her affirmation of change recalls that of Vershinin (*TS* 76) and reaffirms not only the inevitability of struggle but also the possibilities of change.

### vii 'life as it is, life as it should be' (Chekhov)

Thus, Friel's three sisters, like O'Casey's Juno, affirm the value of life and individual struggle towards improvement *but* without endorsing pain. None of Friel's women is a martyr. Moreover, if faith in the potential of individuals to bring about social restructuring was the focus of Chekhov's vision, the same can be said of Friel. The work of both writers dramatises the complexities of subjectivity and its struggle into communication. Such a world view necessarily admits to a tragic reality — the conflicting patterns of nature and culture. Both writers demonstrate this struggle in plays where the permeating mood is a tension among, on the one hand, characters' thoughts, words and actions and, on the other, the meaning behind incomplete statements, the sources of their confusions and inaction. In the 1980s, in the light of their own circumstances, few of Friel's audiences would have remained indifferent to the confusion and changes besetting Chekhov's characters.

In a letter to his friend Suvorin, Chekhov wrote:

writers whom we consider universal, or even just good, and who carry us away, have one essential characteristic in common: they reach somewhere, they call you there, and you sense, not simply intellectually but with your whole personality, that they have a specific aim and ... don't invade and inflame our imagination without reason ... The best writers are realistic and depict life as it is, but because their every line is saturated with the consciousness of its goal, you feel life as it should be in addition to life as it is, and you are captivated by it.<sup>63</sup>

What the writer so clearly values — a productive tension between the past and the future, a connection between 'what is' and 'what should be' — is apparent in Friel's translation, bringing the sad, ironic wisdom of Chekhov closer to contemporary Irish hearing. Through Chekhov's characters, Friel conveys repressed emotions and the exigencies of Northern Ireland. This is poignantly brought into focus in the 'deaf' exchanges between Andrey and Ferapont (*TS* 40-42, 103-104). Such *dialogues des sourds* have become part of Friel's vocabulary.

In *Three Sisters*, the opening of Act Two establishes the distance that has opened up between the newly weds, Natasha and Andrey. Taking delivery of Council papers, Andrey says, 'I'll tell you something Ferapont: life is a great deceiver. Now there's a profundity for you. I was fooling about in my room, killing time, keeping out of the way, and look what I came across [*holds up a book*] — my old university lectures,' (*TS* 40) and later adds, '[*Softly*] If you could hear me, Ferapont, I wouldn't be talking to you. But I must talk to somebody — "to coin a phrase" ' (*TS* 41). When Friel has Andrey quote Tusenbach's tag-phrase, he recalls not only the dreamy Tusenbach but the mechanism which that character uses to help him through difficulties (akin to Friel's Nikolai Kirsanov). Andrey employs the tag-phrase like an escape clause: 'And to coin another phrase — "My wife doesn't understand me". And for some reason I'm afraid of the girls, yes, afraid. ... [*Loudly*] D'you know where I'd love to be at this very moment? In the restaurant of the Great Moscow Hotel!' (*TS* 41). Friel uses this exchange, like Chekhov before him, to emphasise how fragments of conversation can both convey and yet conceal crisis and non-communication.

Friel effects minor alterations to these exchanges, increasing the ironic weight of Ferapont's (apparently limited) world and words, in order to reveal Andrey's growing sense of disillusion and alienation. With each visit from Ferapont, Andrey's only, albeit deaf, confidant, Friel increases the master and servant parody — the would-be university intellectual, an un-aspiring *littérateur* and the provincial servant. Audiences see that both are self-contained and deaf to one another so that the isolation of neither is relieved by contact; it is truly *dialogues des sourds*.

Ferapont's hearsay accounts of Moscovite contractors consuming fatal quantities of pancakes, and of that city's purposeless rope (like Friel's Shpigelsky's dreadful jokes) are absurd but undercut Andrey's notions of the refinement of the metropolis and implicitly illustrate the *poshlyi*<sup>64</sup> aspects of such inflated existences. Apparently separate and different, metropolis and town, master and servant echo one another and offer two perspectives of the same human condition. In Friel's hands, Chekhov's Moscow takes on a significantly ironic tone in an Irish context, the city becomes synonymous with affectation, excess and ineffectiveness.

This sense of the Irish context is again achieved in Act Four, where Friel's Andrey (akin to Joyce's alienated Gabriel Conroy) dreams of a world free from 'this living death' and asserts that 'there is the tiniest glimmer of hope still, Ferapont. We have got to keep believing that all this squalor, all this degradation - this endless round of vodka and cabbage-and-bacon and gossip and pretence ... .' To this, Friel adds: 'we must keep believing in a future for our

children that is *open* and *honest* and *free*. Because the very fact of clinging on to that belief is in itself the beginning of a release, a liberation. Maybe the only liberation available to us ...' (*TS* 104) [my emphasis]. Words such as 'open', 'honest' and 'free', like 'peace', 'content' and 'happiness', voice hope against the prevailing crisis in Ireland, a failure of political leadership and direction, and its explosive ramifications. However, indicative of his absorption of the Chekhovian sense of the absurd, Friel's stage direction reads, '*with failing conviction*' so that Andrey concludes, 'that's what I believe passionately, Ferapont — absolutely.' Thus, Friel establishes the tension between the real and the ideal; Andrey's impassioned affirmation against the facts of the situation (*TS* 104) is undermined by the realities just acknowledged (*TS* 103) and is completely undercut by Ferapont's account of the previous winter in Petersburg where 'two hundred people froze to death ... the porter said ... everyone was scared "stiff"!' Several critics admonished Friel for this type of jocular colloquialism, disallowing the fact that Friel re-vitalises Chekhov's sense of the absurd by making us laugh at the very real sense of confusion underlying Andrey's words. Dissonance is allowed to reverberate. Moreover, Friel undercuts Andrey's emotional outburst not simply because it is exactly that — a momentary outpouring that will not be followed by action — but to underline the wider, more basic dichotomy between the official or dominant ideology and individual experience.

In his own work, especially in *The Freedom of the City* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Friel uses self-deriding laughter and ironic undercutting to check such moments from tipping over into polemic or sentiment. In such exchanges the realist and satirist vies with the idealist and fantasist in a tragicomic tension. In this Friel draws upon the work of O'Casey and Chekhov and yet none of the critics has considered this synthesis, most apparent in Friel's alterations. These same realist-idealist tensions inform the ambiguities of *Translations*. There, the tension between life as it is and as it should be, is epitomised by the exchanges between Owen and Manus. In *Three Sisters* these tragicomic tensions are especially apparent in the exchanges between Andrey and Ferapont, but also between Vershinin and Tusenbach. In both *Three Sisters* and *Translations*, the whole way of life which these people represent is coming under pressure of change, from within and from without. In *Translations* this is signalled in the tension between the locals and absent energies such as 'London', the surveying sappers, and the truant Donnelly twins, as well as the inaccurate re-namings effected by Owen. In *Three Sisters* it is signalled through changes *invisibly effected* by characters such as Protopopov and Natasha's use of her children as well as the *inabilities* of characters on stage like Andrey and Kulygin. Nevertheless, as indicated earlier, Friel changes

Andrey. Although he is broken and ‘unmanly’, his attitude towards Ferapont is ‘without impatience’ (*TS* 103). And it is because he is no longer angry that Friel’s Andrey is able to claim ‘a future for our children that is open and honest and free’ (*TS* 104) and, similarly, that Friel’s Kulygin can persuade us that ‘The most wonderful thing about the human spirit is its resilience’ (*TS* 30). In the context of the bloody 1980s, such lines, even from such exhausted characters, must have functioned like echo chambers of their and Friel’s hope.<sup>65</sup> Is this the sort of additional dialogue that moved some critics to suggest that Friel made wordier and expanded a play that is already very long? Or was there a critical deafness to the potential resonance of such additions? Friel’s additional comments relate to and are extended and counterpointed by Vershinin, who says, ‘We Russians are a people whose aspirations are magnificent; it’s just living we can’t handle’ (*TS* 43). Such comments reflect upon the speakers, their unspoken impact upon one another and how they respond or otherwise to change. Arguably, out of such tensions and ambiguities, Friel creates a critique of the contradictory course of Irish national self-definition, manifest in the embattled situation in Northern Ireland. Again, what Williams says of Chekhov applies equally to Friel in that he is ‘writing about a generation whose whole energy is consumed in the very process of becoming conscious of their own inadequacy and impotence.’ However, with his *Three Sisters*, as with *Translations*, Friel dramatises not only a disillusionment with the institutional apparatus for change but also endorses the individual as the social engineer and in a manner reminiscent of Chekhov.<sup>66</sup>

Between the stage and the auditorium, Chekhov establishes in *Three Sisters* a field of empathetic tension between sounds, words and repetitions. This field of echoes resonates and signals characters’ unfulfilled desires and ambitions (for example, ‘Moscow’ – life? peace?) and the surrounding indifferent reality (in this fictive case, epitomised by Natasha and the unseen but ever-present Protopopov). In many instances, Friel picks up these individual echoes and, through parallels, relates them to repressed tensions in his communities. In parody of Vershinin’s utopian predictions and Tusenbach’s idealism, for example, Friel has Andrey give his ‘future’ (*TS* 104) statement – while looking back over his old university notes! Here Friel asks ‘what have you learnt?’ and ‘how will you proceed?’ Through slight expansions of detail, Friel brings Chekhov’s troubled Russia closer to Irish geography. For example, Elisaveta Fen has Vershinin state:

At one time I lived in the Niemietskaya Street. I used to walk from there to the Krasny Barracks, and I remember there was such a gloomy bridge I had to cross. I used to hear the noise of the water rushing under it. I remember how lonely and sad I felt there. [A pause]. But what a magnificently wide river you have here! It’s a marvellous river!<sup>67</sup>

Friel's Vershinin says:

I used to live in Nyemetsky Street. I could walk to the Red Barracks from there. And on the way you had to cross this black bridge and underneath you could just hear the water - a kind of throaty, strangled sound. It was so - hah! - it wasn't the liveliest place to pass on your way to work every morning by yourself. [*Suddenly interested in the view from the window*] Well, look at that! And the river! Isn't that a really beautiful view! (TS 21).

This is considerably longer than the original wording: '*Odno vremia ia zhil na Nemetskoi ulitse. S Nemetskoi ulitsy ia khazhival v Krasnye kazarmy. Tam po puti ugriumyi most, pod mostom voda shumit. Odinokomu stanovitsia grustno na dushe. [Pauza.] A zdes' kakaia shirokaia, kakaia bogataia reka! Chudesnaia reka!*'<sup>68</sup> But the 'strangled' quality evoked in Friel's version is lifted with a more pronounced upward, hopeful ending, indicative of Friel's intention. The same type of localisation occurs in the exchanges between Andrey and Ferapont. When asked if he had ever been to Moscow, Chekhov's Ferapont simply replies: '[*posle pauzy.*] *Ne byl. Ne privel bog*',<sup>69</sup> which Fen translates as: 'No. It wasn't God's wish'<sup>70</sup> and which Friel rewrites as: 'Me! Oh, God, no. Moscow? Oh, never, never. If it had been the will of God I would have been, though. But there you are' (TS 42). Whether such alteration suggests acceptance or apathy is left for audiences to ponder. In other places, Friel only slightly alters or repeats Chekhov's expression of repressed emotions. For example, after a long outpouring by Vershinin (TS 75-76), the short rhythmic 'ta-ra-ra-ra' exchange between Vershinin and Masha, evocatively signalling their submerged passion in Act Two (TS 77 x 3), is intensified and clarified with repetition by Friel in Act Three (TS 84). Chekhov's Masha-Vershinin 'trum-tum- tum', 'the most original love declaration in the whole literature of the stage', according to David Magarshack,<sup>71</sup> recalls the famous love talk between Kitty and Levin in *Anna Karenina*. Friel retains this music-language and re-employs it in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, where the popular song 'Anything Goes' is repeatedly used to convey the sexual tension between the wandering Gerry Evans and the hearth-bound Christina Mundy. Such strategies confirm the extent to which Friel has absorbed Chekhov's use of apparently isolated sounds and music, and the word as a direct referent but also as a carrier of memories and several meanings, conveying a sense, especially, of repression.

In *Three Sisters*, repeated sounds or phrases such as Masha's whistling, Chebutykin's humming, Tusenbach's tag-phrase, 'to coin a phrase', or Masha's and Vershinin's humming or 'green oak' recitation, unite characters' apparently separate planes or perspectives, making them diaphanous to audiences but not necessarily to characters. In Chekhov, sounds and literary allusions apparently exist independently, forming echoes, revealing levels of meaning or alluding to themes such as social constraints or repressed emotions. Friel localises some

allusions and leaves others intact. He retains, for example, the first two lines from Pushkin's fairy-tale poem *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. These are the first words Masha speaks in Act One (and repeated again in Act IV) and, even without explanation, they convey a sense of wonder and tension between the natural shoreline curve, the green oak tree and its gold chain. Friel also retains Solyony's 'Do not be angry Aleko', a reference to Pushkin's poem *The Gypsies* in which Aleko kills his wife and her lover in a fit of jealousy, and Masha's reference to Gogol's story of a quarrel between Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich, neither of which is likely to be familiar except to Russian scholars.<sup>72</sup> It seems odd that Friel should retain these and yet omits Solyony's lines from Krylov's fable, *The Peasant and the Farm Labourer*: 'He had hardly time to catch his breath before the bear was hugging him to death.' While probably well-known to many Russians, it is unlikely Irish audiences would have picked up Solyony's inference that Masha had pounced, bearlike, upon Vershinin, nor its possible extension to Protopopov when Masha calls him, 'Mikhail Potapych' (*mishka*/bear). The Krylov quotation is used twice again by Chekhov just before the duel but omitted by Friel (*TS* 99) who instead substitutes 'Tweedle-de-dum and tweedle-de-dee, Is there a bird as happy as we' (*TS* 16, 96). The significance of using the Carroll figures from *The Looking Glass* may well be simply a case of familiarity. However, the choice is open to further speculation; whereas Alice manages to resolve the 'battle' between Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee, no such resolution occurs within *Three Sisters*. Was Friel attempting to sanitise the violence? This seems unlikely since the duel still takes place and indeed Friel changes Solyony's '*tsyp-tsy-p-tsy-p*' into the broader, harsher sound, 'quack, quack, quack' (*TS* 15, 22, 23). In doing so, he both localises and intensifies the sound, sense and feeling and, through apparent overstatement, emphasises Solyony's malevolence towards Tusenbach. Friel retains Solyony's literary allusions to Lermontov, contextualising the poet's temperament as 'disenchanted, bored, caustic' (*TS* 57) but he omits Chekhov's Masha's mocking remark to Solyony, 'you frightfully terrible man' (alluding to his Lermontov posturing) and instead has her daub Solyony 'a twisted little pup!' (*TS* 16).

Signals of emotional gaps or signs of tension are sometimes extended with local embellishment. In Act Three, for example, Irina tells Chebutykin that, after her marriage to Tusenbach, like migrating birds, they intend leaving to embark upon their new lives. Off-stage someone plays 'The Maiden's Prayer', while on-stage Kulygin talks about wearing his medal 'For dutiful service to the cause of education.' Kulygin will wear his medal, he says, to celebrate 'the military withdrawal and our return to the way things used to be' (*TS* 93). Both the music and Kulygin's comments, implicitly referring to Vershinin, work in ironic



counterpoint and signal a return to stasis rather than any real departures or change. But when Chebutykin announces that he will also 'leave tomorrow', off-stage, Friel undercuts this, introducing the saccharine sound of '*a harp and violin in the far distance play[ing] 'Won't You Buy My Pretty Flowers?' (TS 96)*. This song has already been boisterously hammed up in Act Two (TS 58-59) and gave Natasha the excuse for cancelling the mummers and expelling the group. When repeated here, it is literally 'bringing on the violins' but equally, in a tragicomic way, it suggests that neither the doctor's departure, nor that of Tusenbach and Irina, is likely to happen. This off-stage music is yet another example of Friel's effective use of music to comment upon characters' moods and actions and relates to the earlier use of the song (TS 58-59) and also to Chebutykin's repeated 'Left in the Lurch' refrain.

In quick succession Natasha, Masha, Andrey, Solyony, Ferapont come and go before Tusenbach arrives. Through a slight expansion of Tusenbach's dialogue, Friel slows the pace so that the baron finally admits, 'it's never the great passions, the great ambitions that determine the course our lives take, but some trivial, piddling little thing that we dismiss and refuse to take seriously; until it's too late. And then we recognise that the piddling little thing has manipulated us into a situation that is irrevocable and ... final' (TS 101). Friel apparently extends this sentiment with Solyony's 'Tweedle dum, Tweedle dee' comments. But the use of this phrase increases the menacing quality of Solyony. Whereas Lewis Carroll's twins, under Alice's guidance, were able to resolve their differences, this is not the case between Solyony and Tusenbach. Off-stage, the duel looms. Twice, from off-stage, Solyony calls. In effect, the duel brings the meaning and purpose of life into question. Nevertheless, although with Tusenbach's death the potential for individual happiness is seen to be uncertain, it is not extinguished. And significantly, it is Irina who asks, 'all this suffering — what is it all for?', but then reassures her sisters that 'Some day we'll understand ... But in the meantime life must go on' (TS 113). Out of this closing moment of crisis, Chekhov's three sisters build an affirmation of life rather than despair or perpetual discontent. This is a quality John Keyes observed in Rea's production and which gives us some insight into the elements that attracted Friel to this play. Throughout *Three Sisters* Chekhov questions not so much the value of life but how humans spend it. If anything is criticised, it is the form rather than the substance. Read in this light, Natasha, Protopopov, Chebutykin and Solyony are negative energies; and apparently minor characters such as Ferapont and Anfisa (like Matvei and Katya in *A Month in the Country*), by their example, affirm the value of struggle which in turn is recognised by the three Prozorov sisters. Throughout *Three Sisters*, negative and positive voices vie for attention, but since all are human, none is absolutely

enlightened. Nevertheless, each is converted or brought to a level of social self-knowledge. These are the dynamics Friel sought to bring to his audiences, in their own idiom (some examples of which are cited in Appendix Three).

viii 'Who knows if what has been called death is life, and life is death' (Euripides)<sup>73</sup>

Chekhov said, 'All I wanted was to say honestly to people: "Have a look at yourselves and see how bad and dreary your lives are!" The important thing is that people should realise that, for when they do, they will most certainly create another and better life for themselves.'<sup>74</sup> With these images, Friel, like Heaney, asks audiences to 'start seeing.' He does not, as some critics suggest, patronise Irish audiences or abuse Chekhov. Rather, he confronts his audiences and asks them to examine the roots of their suffering. Why do we long for 'Moscow'? *Three Sisters* can be analysed in terms of confusion, self-deceit, non-communication and inertia, or the fate of humans in the face of indifferent nature. It can be interpreted, as is so often the performed case, as representing the demise of the old order in the on-rush of materialism. But each of these readings implies a solution or sense of closure. Much more naked, the suffering in Chekhov's vision (like that of Euripides) defies such neat definitions and offers no solutions, no universal idea. This is part of its terrible irony, the paradox of life in death and death in life. The suffering examined in *Three Sisters* is individual but also representative. Chekhov does not tell us so; he shows us recurring patterns of unspoken antagonisms and unquestioned oppositions. Friel uses these same patterns to confront his audiences as to the sources of their suffering but also to emphasise their commonality. What may result as a consequence of this Russian encounter, remains to be seen. This uncertainty can be read as the beginnings of change, away from fixed oppositions and this is why the vision of Chekhov, moving between speculation and revelation but offering no solutions, was so appropriate for Friel's theatre of enquiry.

As indicated at the outset, Friel's translations contest the interpretative status and relevance of established English translations in both poetological and ideological terms. More importantly they challenge Irish acceptance of them, and the making of their own oppositions. Through analogy, Friel's translations probe the relationship between the local and the socio-historical context, conveying once again both the confusion and also the resilience of the human spirit. As Heaney says, they 'try for the right tone — not tract, not thesis.'<sup>75</sup>

## ix conclusion — translating changes

Potentially, to translate a story from the past, from a dead world of custom and fixed ideas, into an unpredictable situation (such as audience response) where it becomes subjected to chance, is to make the past that is dead come alive. Such is the context of Friel's translations. They are, as shown with his *Three Sisters*, cultural communications, prompting enquiry. Friel perceives translation as synonymous with enquiry, an evolutionary energy in life and, sometimes, reflected in literature. In this sense, all of Friel's dramas are translations, just as his theatre is one of self-critical enquiry and experiment. And since representations of reality inevitably change, invariably experiments arise, raising questions and tensions between the old and new which in turn require examination.

Artistically as well as personally Chekhov was, and remains, an exemplar for Friel. Philosophically and politically he suits Friel's purposes. In a letter to his friend Suvorin, Chekhov wrote: 'what is needed is work; everything else can go to the devil. The main thing is to be *just* - the rest will be added unto us.' Chekhov's personal passion and artistic restraint inspired Friel and inform his writing, and his efforts with *Field Day* to accomplish something in the world outside theatre, a critical condition for growth and justice. Nicholas Moravcevic claims that Chekhov:

concentrates on the effect of a single *theme* upon the thoughts and emotions of a group of finely drawn and subtly counterpointed characters ... The conventional protagonist is ... replaced by an ensemble, and his protracted struggle of will against an opposing force is supplanted by the epiphany of a collective pathos before an oppressive inevitability.<sup>76</sup>

The same can be claimed for Friel. Moravcevic maintains that Chekhov's shift from 'naturalistic veracity to impressionist selectivity' gave his plays a transparency whereby audiences are privileged to know simultaneously what *does* happen on stage, what the various characters *think* has happened, and how the individuals' perceptions determine their parts in the action as it unfolds. In Friel's best work, as in Chekhov's, the dramatic interest lies not in action but in the differing interpretations that various characters give to the same events. Through Friel's multiple perspectives, audiences see what characters think. At a structural level this can be described as the tension between the realist and satirist and the idealist and fantasist. But more importantly, it is the technical rendering of a psychological level whereby the thoughts and the sense of human experience which such thoughts produce are made visible. The complexity of this spectrum, the gradations between the heart and head, is most powerfully rendered in Friel's *The Freedom of the City* (1973), *Faith Healer* (1979), *Translations* (1980), *Wonderful Tennessee* (1993) and *Molly Sweeney* (1994), plays in which language continuously requires translation if mutual understanding is to be approached. The

fact that this same complexity is explored by Turgenev is central to understanding why Friel also rewrote *Fathers and Sons* and *A Month in the Country*.

Georgy Tovstonogov comments that:

Chekhov was the first Russian playwright to see the complexity and even impossibility of mutual understanding, to see man's difficulty in expressing all he thinks and feels. I think that the themes of spiritual loneliness and isolation, and the futility of trying to reach another human soul, were suggested by Chekhov to the many foreign authors in whose writings they later appeared.<sup>77</sup>

The Chekhovian analysis of these two Russian critics describes the impact and influence of Chekhov upon Friel. Like Chekhov, Friel makes us see the complexity, perhaps even the impossibility of mutual understanding, doubly disabled by human subjectivity and by the absence of the mother language and the weight of incarcerating oppositions. Like Chekhov, Friel shows the human difficulty of expressing what we think and feel and, especially, a sense of spiritual loneliness and isolation. But if previous interpretations and productions have led us to believe that Chekhov accepts as futile the attempt to reach others, then Friel re-appropriates such interpretations and challenges us to re-evaluate the resonance of necessary uncertainty, implicit in Olga's closing words. More than anything, Friel's alterations encourage faith in the possibilities of change.

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<sup>1</sup>. *Three Sisters. Plays by Anton Chekhov*. Trans. and with an intro. by Elisaveta Fen. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1959, *The Three Sisters: An Authoritative Text Edition*. Trans. Tyrone Guthrie and Leonid Kipnis. Ed. Henry Popkin. New York: Avon Books, 1965, *Three Sisters and Other Plays by Anton Chekhov*. Trans. Constance Garnett. London: Chatto and Windus, 1961, *Three Sisters. Anton Chekhov's Plays*. Trans. and Ed. by Eugene K. Bristow. New York: W.W. Norton Co. Inc., 1977, *Three Sisters. Chekhov: The Major Plays*. Trans. Ann Dunnigan. New York: New American Library, A Signet Classic, 1964 and *Three Sisters. Chekhov, Five Plays*. Trans. Ronald Hingley. The World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980.

<sup>2</sup>. For example, the Mendelssohn violin concerto and Irish ballads in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, the Bach organ prelude and fugue, and street ballads in *The Freedom of the City*, the Chopin piano concerto in *Aristocrats*, Jerome Kern music in *Faith Healer*, Tussenbach's piano efforts and Chebutykin's 'There I was, waiting at the church' in *Three Sisters*; Beethoven's Romance for violin in G-major, Op 40, cello pieces, the 'Te Deum' and 'Drink to Me Only' in *Fathers and Sons*, Vera's piano recitals and Kolya's five fingered exercises in *A Month in the Country*. With regard to Chekhov's use of echoic phrases and music, see Greta Anderson, "The Music of *The Cherry Orchard*: Repetitions in the Russian Text." *Modern Drama* XXXIV 3 Sep. (1991): 340-350.

<sup>3</sup>. See Gareth W. Jones "Far from the West End: Chekhov and the Welsh language stage 1924-1991." *Chekhov on the British Stage*. Ed. and Trans. Patrick Miles. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. 101-112.

<sup>4</sup>. Jacques Derrida's "Des tours de Babel." In *Theories of Translation*. Eds. R. Schutte and J. Bignenet. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1992. 218-227.

<sup>5</sup>. See André Lefevere. "Why Waste Our Time on Rewrites? The Trouble with Interpretation and the Role of Rewriting in an alternative Paradigm" in *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*. Ed. Theo Hermans. London: Croom Helm, 1985. 215-433 (219 and 232-3).

<sup>6</sup>. André Lefevere. *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. London: Routledge, 1992. 5.

- <sup>7</sup>. Susan Bassnett-McGuire. General Editor's preface in *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* 1992. vii.
- <sup>8</sup>. "Field Day Theatre Co. to Present Chekov's *Three Sisters*." *Derry Journal* 19 June 1981, 5.
- <sup>9</sup>. "The Saturday Interview, Elgy Gillespie talked to Brian Friel." *Irish Times* 5 Sep. 1981. See also Harry White. "Brian Friel, Thomas Murphy and the use of Music in Contemporary Irish Drama." *Modern Drama*. XXXIII 4 December (1990): 553-61.
- <sup>10</sup>. Martin O'Brien. "Friel Gives Chekhov's Vision New Meaning." *Belfast Telegraph* 5 Sep. 1981.
- <sup>11</sup>. Vsevolod Meyerhold. "Teatre (k istorii tekhnike)" in *Teatr: kniga o Novom teatre*. St. Petersburg: Shiponik, 1908.143-45. A partial English translation of this essay appears in *Meyerhold on Theatre*. ed. and trans. Edward Braun. London: Methuen, 1969. 25-39.
- <sup>12</sup>. Raymond Williams. *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1987. 107; 106.
- <sup>13</sup>. Interview. Gillespie-Friel. *Irish Times* 5 Sep. 1981.
- <sup>14</sup>. Interview Agnew-Friel. *Magill* December (1980): 59.
- <sup>15</sup>. Ulick O'Connor. "Friel Takes Derry by Storm." *Sunday Tribune* 6 August 1981.
- <sup>16</sup>. A. P. Chekhov. *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh. Tom chetvertyi P'esy i vodevili*, Moscow: Pravda, 1984. 499.
- <sup>17</sup>. Translation, John Goodliffe, Russian Dept., University of Canterbury, Christchurch.
- <sup>18</sup>. A.P. Chekhov. (1984), 4. 433.
- <sup>19</sup>. Friel letter to author 31 Jan. 1996.
- <sup>20</sup>. Anton Chekhov. *Three Sisters. Plays by Anton Chehov*. Trans. and with an intro. by Elisaveta Fen. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1959. 330.
- <sup>21</sup>. Anton Chekhov. *Three Sisters and Other Plays*. Trans. Constance Garnett. London: Chatto and Windus, 1961. 95.
- <sup>22</sup>. Anton Chekhov. *The Oxford Chekhov, Vol. III*. Trans. and ed. by Ronald Hingley. London: Oxford UP, 1964. 139.
- <sup>23</sup>. Anton Chekhov. *Chekhov: The Major Plays*. Trans. Ann Dunnigan. New York: New American Library, A Signet Classic, 1964. 312.
- <sup>24</sup>. Michael Coveney. Review. *Financial Times* 10 Sep. 1981.
- <sup>25</sup>. See "Memorandum." *Irish Times* 12 Sep. 1981 regarding the military security and helicopters.
- <sup>26</sup>. See Donal O'Donnell. "Friel and a Tale of *Three Sisters*." *Sunday Press* 30 Aug. 1981.
- <sup>27</sup>. Derry, Belfast, Maghera, Carrickmore, Enniskillen, Dungannon, Newry, Armagh, Dublin, Portadown, Coleraine, Galway, Tralee, Limerick and Cork.
- <sup>28</sup>. Desmond Rushe. "Faithful but not quite True Chekhov." *Irish Independent* 10 Sep. 1981, 22.
- <sup>29</sup>. John Keyes. *Belfast News Letter* 10 Sep. 1981.
- <sup>30</sup>. Anon. Review. *Dungannon Observer* 12 Sep. 1981.
- <sup>31</sup>. Martin O'Brien. "Friel Gives Chekhov's Vision New Meaning." *Belfast Telegraph* 5 Sept, 1981.
- <sup>32</sup>. Ulick O'Connor. "Friel Takes Derry by Storm." *Sunday Tribune* 6 Sep. 1981.
- <sup>33</sup>. Con Houlihan. "Turning Chekhov Gold into Base Metal." *Evening Press* 28 Sep. 1981.
- <sup>34</sup>. Diane Herron. "Not a 'Translation' in the Accepted Sense." *Londonderry Sentinel* 18.Sep.81.
- <sup>35</sup>. Colm Cronin. "*Three Sisters*: Gaiety." *Sunday Tribune* 4 Oct. 1981. See also Robert Hewison, "The Soldiers Tale." *Sunday Times* 9 Aug. 1981.
- <sup>36</sup>. Anon. "Soft, strong and very long." *Sunday News* 13 Sep. 1981.
- <sup>37</sup>. Michael Coveney. "*Three Sisters*." *Financial Times* 10 Sep. 1981.

- <sup>38</sup>. David Nolan. "Three Sisters in Derry Guildhall." *Irish Times* 10 Sep. 1981, Noeleen Dowling, "Lot to Admire, not Something to Rave About." *Evening Press* 9 Sep. 1981. "Whose Play Anyway." Anon. *Sunday Press*. 4 Oct. 1981 and Anon. "Three Sisters." *Sunday Journal* 4. Oct. 1981.
- <sup>39</sup>. Gay Byrne. "The World of Gay Byrne." *Sunday World*. 4 Oct. 1981.
- <sup>40</sup>. Kathleen Corrigan. "Field Day for Stephen Rea." *Company* Oct. 1983, 45.
- <sup>41</sup>. Irving Wardle. "Seeking a sense of Ireland." *The Times* 5 Oct. 1981.
- <sup>42</sup>. Founder of the Taganka Theatre in 1964, dedicated 'to be an experimental theatre that would incorporate the theories of Vakhtangov, Meyerhold and Brecht' and, as such, be opposed to the longstanding Stanislavsky traditions of the Moscow Arts Theatre. Alexander Gershkovich. *Taganka Theatre: The Rebellious Soviet Theatre 1964-84*. Benson, Vermont: Chalidize Publication, 1986.
- <sup>43</sup>. I am indebted to John Goodliffe (University of Canterbury) for bringing Gershkovich's account to my attention and for generously providing me with this translation.
- <sup>44</sup>. See pages 16-17 of Introduction.
- <sup>45</sup>. Friel stated that his translation concerns and choices centre around 'meaning ... tone and ... sound.' See: Donal O'Donnell. "Friel and a Tale of Three Sisters." *Sunday Press* 30 Aug. 1981.
- <sup>46</sup>. Robert Tracy outlines how Komisarjevsky altered the characters of Tuzenbakh and Solyony (originally written as 'drab' and 'sinister and pathetic' respectively) 'making the men more attractive.' He also turned Masha and Irina into romantic heroines, adding a false numinosity to their relationships. The director also cut 'many of Irina's and Tuzenbakh's speeches about their need to work.' Komisarjevsky cut Natasha's 'Lady Macbeth scene' which Chekhov intended as 'terrifying'; he did not retain Chekhov's specific settings for each Act which, in effect, demonstrate Natasha's expulsion of the Prozorovs. Tracy details Komisarjevsky's drastic cuts to the 'philosophical' speeches of Vershinin and Tuzenbakh, and the key Chekhovian insight implicit in Chebutykin's 'Balzac was married at Berdichev' (Act 2) speech, as well as patronymics and affectionate diminutives such as 'Olya' and 'Andryusha.' Komisarjevsky also 'deliberately altered the play's period, making it more remote in time and so more picturesque' and 'stressed movement to combat the notion that Chekhov's characters were passive, lethargic.' Robert Tracy. "Komisarjevsky's 1926 *Three Sisters*." *Chekhov on the British Stage*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. 65-77.
- <sup>47</sup>. In her essay, "English translations: a Russian view", Valentina Ryapolova comments: 'in a radio interview, talking of *Three Sisters*, Michael Frayn found that Chekhov's characters, and Russians generally, express themselves too bluntly and abrasively for British ears.' Ryapolova comments that this observation shows how different a national culture looks from the inside and from the outside. She points out that in Chekhov, Masha is offhand with her family, friends and old Anfisa and that Irina unceremoniously calls her 'Mashka' (Fen 285) whilst Olga, instead of greeting Vershinin with some polite introductory remark, asks him very directly, 'Are you from Moscow?' and declares that she does not remember him. Ryapolova comments that despite their apparent directness, 'it is the three sisters, not "suave", "genteel" Natasha, who are genuinely well-mannered, considerate, and "intelligentny"' and concludes that 'this is a "Russian paradox" that has to be conveyed in any English translation.' Valentina Ryapolova. "English translations: a Russian view." *Chekhov on the British Stage*. 1993.
- <sup>48</sup>. "Chekhov in Irish Idiom." *Derry Journal* 28 Aug. 1981.
- <sup>49</sup>. Cf. how the word 'evict' is used by Friel's Masha in Act II: 'What the hell. If we're being evicted [Shouts] then we ought to leave quietly, mustn't we? [To Irina] Nothing the matter with Bobik. It's mammy who's - [she taps her head] - just a little bit. [Loudly] Bitch!' (TS 60). Compare with Hingley's Masha: 'So why are we punished? Well, if we're being shown the door, through the door we must go. It isn't Bobik who's sick. She is - up here. [Taps her forehead with her finger] Silly little shopgirl' (TS 35 Hingley).
- <sup>50</sup>. A.P. Chekhov (1984) 4. 471.
- <sup>51</sup>. Ryapolova. *Chekhov on the British Stage*. 1993.
- <sup>52</sup>. See: A.P. Chekhov (1984) 4. 492-493,
- <sup>53</sup>. David Magarshack. *The Real Chekhov, An Introduction to Chekhov's Last Plays*. London: Allen; New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972.147.
- <sup>54</sup>. Friel. *Three Sisters*. 1981. 50.

- <sup>55</sup>. Compare stage directions *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1990) page 21.
- <sup>56</sup>. Irving Wardle. "Seeking a sense of Ireland." *The Times* 5 Oct. 1981.
- <sup>57</sup>. Also questioning the absence of a 'standard' translation, see Ulf Dantanus. *Brian Friel: A Study*. 1988. 185.
- <sup>58</sup>. Fen. 295.
- <sup>59</sup>. Fen. 300-01.
- <sup>60</sup>. See: Eugene O'Neill. *A Touch of the Poet*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1957.
- <sup>61</sup>. Fen. 330.
- <sup>62</sup>. A.P. Chekhov (1984) 4. 499.
- <sup>63</sup>. Chekhov-Suvorin, 25 Nov. 1892. Karlinsky. 1973. 242-44. (243).
- <sup>64</sup>. *Poshlost'*, self-satisfied mediocrity.
- <sup>65</sup>. Cf. Garnett 23, Fen 266, Hingley 185, Frayn 19 and McGuinness 15.
- <sup>66</sup>. This belief is reflected in many of Chekhov's letters and is echoed by Friel in his Gillespie and O'Toole interviews. See Chekhov to Orlov, 22 Feb. 1899. *Letters of Anton Chekhov*. Trans. Michael Henry Heim in collaboration with Simon Karlinsky. Selection and Introduction by Simon Karlinsky. London: The Bodley Head, 1973. 340-41. See also John Tulloch. "Conventions of Dying: Structural Contrasts in Chekhov and Bergman." *Conflict and Control in the Cinema*. Ed. J. Tulloch. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977. 736-55
- <sup>67</sup>. Fen. 259.
- <sup>68</sup>. 'One time I lived in German Street. From German Street I used to walk to the Red Barracks. There on the way is a gloomy bridge, under the bridge the water makes a noise. To a lonely person it becomes sad in the soul. [Pause] And here what a wide, what a rich river! A marvellous river!' Translation - John Goodliffe, University of Canterbury, Christchurch. A.P. Chekhov (1984) 4. 442.
- <sup>69</sup>. This translates as: '[after a pause] I've not. God did not take (me).' A.P. Chekhov (1984) 4. 455.
- <sup>70</sup>. Fen. 275.
- <sup>71</sup>. David Magarshack. *Chekhov the Dramatist*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1960. 260.
- <sup>72</sup>. As pointed out in the notes in the Pravda edition of Chekhov, these words are actually not in Pushkin's *Gypsies*. See A.P. Chekhov (1984). 4. 570.
- <sup>73</sup>. Fragment from the *Phrixus*. *Oxford Book of Greek Verse*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1930, repr. 1951. 416. I am indebted to Dr. Gordon Spence, University of Canterbury, Christchurch for this translation.
- <sup>74</sup>. "Introduction." Magarshack. 1960. 14.
- <sup>75</sup>. From "Chekhov on Sakhalin." Seamus Heaney. *Station Island*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984. 18-19.
- <sup>76</sup>. Nicholas Moravcevic. "Chekhov and Naturalism." Ed. and trans. Eugene K. Bristow. *Anton Chekhov's Plays*. New York: W.W. Norton Co. Inc, 1977. 294-5, 298 and 306 respectively.
- <sup>77</sup>. Georgy Tovstonogov. "Chekhov's *Three Sisters* at the Gorky Theatre." *Anton Chekhov's Plays*. Ed. and trans. Eugene K. Bristow. New York: W.W. Norton Co. Inc. 1977. 326-339 (328).

**Chapter IV *Fathers and Sons***

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### Chapter summary

This chapter introduces and contextualises aspects of Turgenev's novel, *Fathers and Sons* in order to explore the reasons why Friel was drawn to this work. Covering some well-tread ground, the introduction sketches the multivalent nature of the novel and its complex protagonist, Bazarov, and the critical response these attracted. Subsequently, moving between the novel and the play texts, this chapter examines the personal ambivalence of Turgenev's nihilist's character, anchored in a creed of self-sufficiency, and relates this to Friel's refashioned Bazarov and other interventions that encourage rejuvenation.

This chapter argues that Friel's critical and creative purposes necessitated quite major modifications and that his use of the novel hinges around two of its integral facets: the *raznochintsy*<sup>1</sup> (opposed to the nobility, eager for change and akin to Friel's own outsiders) and the *intelligentsia*<sup>2</sup> (a mixture of classes intent upon improving conditions overall in Russia). Topical in Turgenev's time and embodied in varying degrees in his various characters in *Fathers and Sons*, these two concepts, the *raznochinets* and the *intelligentsia*, are used in the novel to examine the difference between liberalism and radicalism and between gradualism and revolution — a geography of improvement. These issues and how they affect characters, particularly the role of the family in relation to wider society, attracted Friel and are implicitly re-employed by him since, as he indicates, they raise the perennial enquiry about how to live a just and free life. Throughout Friel's work the role of family and education are inextricably linked to pressing socio-political issues. Hence Friel's empathy with the work of Turgenev whose writing advanced the intellectual, socio-political ferment of his period.<sup>3</sup>

In the writing of Turgenev, and especially in *Fathers and Sons*, Friel saw an examination of the tensions between tradition and modernity. Turgenev's critical re-examination of Western values and influence was, in some respects, akin to Friel's own re-reading of the influence of the English language and English values in Ireland, his concern for informed Irish self-understanding and a desire to comprehend contemporary Ireland.

Friel's adaptation of the novel (as translated by Ralph Matlaw) was commissioned by the National Theatre, London and first produced at the Lyttelton for an English audience.<sup>4</sup> And even though it is not as markedly idiomatic as his re-writing of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, it examines common ground, the role of family and of education in relation to self-location and society at large. Nevertheless it is a play wholly reminiscent of his own work, constantly examining effective communication. But whether or not the modifications fully replicate

Turgenev's exploration, or whether Friel has used this as the raw material for a new investigation in relation to his target audience, is the prevailing enquiry of this chapter.

### i Turgenev, a chronicler of his times

P. F. Yakubovich describes Turgenev as 'a gentleman by birth, an aristocrat by upbringing and character, a gradualist by conviction [who had] perhaps without knowing it himself ... sympathised with and even served the Russian revolution.' Turgenev's *dvorianin* (more than privileged)<sup>5</sup> upbringing afforded him the advantages of education, travel and the opportunity to develop the ability to look beyond his own family, his class and his generation, as reflected in *Fathers and Sons*. Before this, the path towards political development was depicted as painfully slow in the hierarchical world of *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1847-50).

After the collapse of the Paris revolution of 1848, Turgenev became increasingly pessimistic about democratic Westernism. He saw as shallow the snobbish adulation of all things Western simply because they were Western and therefore fashionable. We see this in the near-caricatures, Panshin in *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (1859) and Pavel Kirsanov in *Fathers and Sons*. Such characters represent Turgenev's reappraisal of Western idealists in 1848, and his growing awareness of the need for a new 'faith.' Not surprisingly, much of the writing of this period is shaped by questions about patriotism, social usefulness, debates between Westernism and Slavophilism, egoism and altruism, idealist contemplation and revolutionary action and Turgenev's own critical re-examination of the West embodied in characters who are assessed in terms of what Russia needs. In Turgenev's eyes, his own class, despite (or because of) its excellent education in abstract philosophy, was composed of 'Hamlets' and 'superfluous men', ill-equipped to deal with the realities of Russian life. A new type of hero was required, a man of action. Characters such as the Kirsanov brothers in *Fathers and Sons* are criticised because they are no longer socially beneficial to Russia. Pragmatic types are presented positively. In Turgenev's opinion, they are what Russia and her future desperately need. However, neither type is held up as exemplary since both reflect the contemporary socio-political crisis and the need for change. In this sense, Turgenev's work stands not only as a chronicle of his times, but as a series of cautious suggestions of what Russia needs, even if he refuses (like Chekhov and Friel after him) to supply agendas or solutions.

The chief focus of Turgenev's pessimism before 1856 was his critical treatment of his own generation of 'spiritual invalids', the liberal intelligentsia of the 1840s. In an essay, 'Hamlet and Don Quixote, the hero as Will or Idea'<sup>6</sup>, Turgenev reproached his contemporaries for what he considered to be their Hamletesque 'disease' of introspection and

their inability to act.<sup>7</sup> Turgenev concludes the essay by asking whether those who sacrifice themselves, the men of radical action, are any happier than those who reconcile duty and desire; and whether idealist contemplation and revolutionary action are mutually exclusive.

These questions underlie the central issues considered in *Fathers and Sons* and indicate something of why Friel was drawn to and eventually adapted this novel. The novel, while sympathetic to the older liberals, stands as a condemnation of the dominant order, the Russian ruling class.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, it can be argued that the author's sympathy is largely on the side of the adherents of the rising, non-aristocratic *intelligentsia*. The work was written in revolutionary Paris where the author's sympathies lay unreservedly with the communes and it is dedicated to V.G. Belinsky who, along with Nikolai Dobrolyubov, was the source of Bazarov's portrait. Turgenev came close to being a writer *engagé* under the influence of Belinsky who insisted that the writer must bear witness to the truth and, as a citizen, be responsible to one's fellow-countrymen. Belinsky encouraged Turgenev towards social realism and this influence is apparent in Turgenev's writings from the 1840s onwards especially in *The Bailiff* in the *Sketches*. Friel's alterations, however, affirm that while he uses Turgenev's enquiry into the prevailing 'spiritual invalidity' and inactivity among the contemporary liberal *intelligentsia*, certain aspects of the novel are used to reveal the consequences of repression, personal and political and to re-affirm the value of relationships and the possibilities for change.

In Russia, the philosophical idealism of the 1840s gave way to the political radicalism of the 1860s. In 1855, when it was obvious that Russia was losing the Crimean War, Nicholas I was succeeded by Alexander II, the Czar-Liberator who decreed the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. If the first half of the decade was staid, even stagnant, the second half was one of ideological ferment. Under the editorship of Nikolai Nekrasov, the movement within *The Contemporary* illustrates this process of radicalisation and was spearheaded by Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-89), author of *What Is to Be Done?* (1864), and Nikolai Dobrolyubov (1836-61). Both were impatient with Turgenev's absorption with what they considered to be affairs of the heart at a time when they believed that all honourable people should be examining political and social problems and reproached him for failing, in their opinion, to depict the new problems of Russia and the new men.

It is precisely because *Fathers and Sons* showed the competing pressures and widespread confusion of its time that critical reaction to it was divided and extreme. A secret police report noted that the novel had 'a beneficent influence on the public mind ... [and that] to the surprise of the younger generation, which had recently been applauding him, with this work

Turgenev branded our under-age revolutionaries with the biting name of “Nihilist” and shook the doctrine of materialism and its representatives.<sup>9</sup> While many conservatives praised Turgenev for (what seemed) his attack on the nihilists, young radical opinion led by Dobrolyubov and Antonovich accused Turgenev of slander and of caricaturing their efforts. They rejected his pessimistic, quasi-deterministic philosophy, showing man as doomed to die and unable to reconcile duty and desire. Turgenev responded to this cacophony of opinions in *Apropos of ‘Fathers and Sons’* (1868-9):

While some accuse me of insulting the younger generation, of being out of touch, of obscurantism, they inform me that ‘they burn my photographs with contemptuous laughter’ - others, on the other hand, indignantly reproach me with grovelling before that same younger generation. “You are crawling at Bazarov’s feet!” - one correspondent exclaims. “You only pretend to condemn him; in reality you ingratiate yourself with him, and await a single careless smile of his as a favour”.

Turgenev continued:

I understand the reasons for the anger my book aroused in a certain faction. They are not groundless, and I accept - without false humility - part of the reproaches made to me. The term “nihilist” which I launched, was at that time used by many who only sought an incident, an excuse, to stop a movement that had taken possession of Russian society. The term was not used by me as a reproach nor with the intent to insult; but as an exact and appropriate expression of a fact that had materialised, a historical fact; it was turned into a weapon of denunciation, of irrevocable condemnation, - almost as a brand of shame.<sup>10</sup>

Three letters in particular sum up the competing critical response to the novel chronicling Turgenev’s time *and* the competing strains within the writer himself (Sands 1965 xi). In response to an accusation of bias by A.A. Fet, he stated: ‘Did I want to abuse Bazarov or to extol him? I do not know that myself since I don’t know whether I love him or hate him! There you have tendentiousness! Katkov took me to task for making Bazarov into an apotheosis.’<sup>11</sup> In a letter to K.K. Sluchevsky, a minor poet and spokesperson for some young Russian radicals in Heidelberg who considered Kukshin the ‘most successful of all’ the characters, Turgenev explained that he ‘did not want to “sugar-coat” [Bazarov simply to get] the young on my side immediately’ or ‘to purchase popularity through ... tricks.’ He describes Bazarov as ‘a democrat to his fingertips’, adding that ‘if he is called a “nihilist” that must be read as “revolutionary” ... *My entire tale is directed against the nobility as the leading class.*’ He continues:

I dreamt of a figure that was grim, wild, huge, half grown out of the ground, powerful, sardonic, honest - and doomed to destruction nevertheless ... some sort of strange pendent to Pugachëv<sup>12</sup> etc. Up to now only two people, Dostoevsky and Botkin, have understood Bazarov completely, that is, understood my intentions.<sup>13</sup>

Further, in response to Alexander Herzen's complaint that 'if you had forgotten about all the Chernyshevskys in the world while you were writing, it would have been better for Bazarov', Turgenev insisted:

in creating Bazarov, I was not only angry with him, but felt 'an attraction, a sort of disease'<sup>14</sup> towards him, ... Of course he crushes 'the man with the fragrant mustache' [Pavel] and others! That is the triumph of democracy over aristocracy. With hand on heart, I feel no guilt towards Bazarov and could not give him an unnecessary sweetness. If he is disliked as he is, with all his ugliness, it means that I am at fault and was not able to cope with the figure I chose. It wouldn't take much to present him as an ideal; but to make him a wolf and justify him just the same - that was difficult. ... It seems to me, on the contrary, that the feeling opposite to exasperation appears in everything, in his death etc.<sup>15</sup>

These letters, written immediately after the publication of *Fathers and Sons*, indicate that for Turgenev, Bazarov was 'a tragic hero' and 'a wolf', someone for whom he felt empathy and 'an involuntary attraction.'<sup>16</sup> Each of these descriptions appears to be genuinely inscribed but, read together, they indicate that no authoritative definition or single understanding of the novel and its characters is available to us. More than anything, these letters illustrate the complexity of the socio-political context, the human ambiguity underlying the text and Turgenev's sense of embattlement. They also throw light on Friel's choice of this controversial material.

In *A Foreword to the Novels* (1880) Turgenev wrote that throughout he had attempted to use 'a Shakespearian gaze' 'to depict honestly and impartially ... "the body and pressure of time" - the rapidly changing face of cultured Russians - as faithfully as possible and with the minimum of tendentiousness.'<sup>17</sup> He spoke out against utilitarian art<sup>18</sup>, insisting that art should serve no extraneous ends. Writing to Sluchevsky, he is adamant that his attack was directed against the nobility and their leadership.<sup>19</sup> To both Sluchevsky and Herzen he confides that if Bazarov, 'with all his coarseness, heartlessness, pitiless dryness and sharpness', is disliked, it is his author's fault<sup>20</sup> and in letters to Saltykov, he describes Bazarov as 'the most sympathetic of my characters.' Seven years after publication, correspondence with Ludwig Pietsch reflects Turgenev's continued sense of embattlement: 'through Bazarov I was (and still am) bespattered with mud and filth', and he proceeded to give Pietsch 'carte blanche' rights of translation saying, 'if you wish, you can have Bazarov marry Odintsova; I won't protest! On the contrary.'<sup>21</sup> In the same year he wrote to Annenkov that 'no author understands completely what he is doing [insisting that] it is clearer for an outsider', and to Borisov he admitted: 'God only knows whether I loved [Bazarov] or hated him.' By his own admission, Turgenev was torn between admiration for his 'wolf', and preservation of the values Bazarov sought to negate: art, love, the family, civilisation and

individual sensibility. The tension between professed and inwardly owned values underlines and in part explains the resultant sense of fracture or self-contradictions in many of Turgenev's characters and their conflicts as well as his personal (but not authorial) ambiguity towards them.<sup>22</sup> Friel comments that 'all [Turgenev's] days he was a ditherer, racked between irreconcilable beliefs and compulsions. An instinctive revolutionary who needed the complacency of conservatism.'<sup>23</sup> As Friel's two rewritings demonstrate, the ambiguity that marks the characters of Turgenev, a weave of psychological, socio-historical and poetical elements, attracted Friel and, coincidentally, provided him with an analogous enquiry.

## ii Friel's attraction to Turgenev's enquiry

Friel has indicated that two qualities in particular attracted him to *Fathers and Sons*. Firstly, he saw the potential of tapping into the novel's enquiry into socio-political struggle centred around two emerging Russian energies, the *raznochintsy* and the *intelligentsia*. These growing energies, like the Civil Rights movement in Ireland, were calling for moral government and social and political equity. Embodied in the novel, they form part of Turgenev's scrutiny of corruption endemic in the dominant order and, in part, they articulate his belief in the possibilities of change in Russia on the eve of the Emancipation of the serfs. The novel's resistance to polemic, in curious tandem with the author's personal ambivalent sensibilities, giving it a tragicomic set, makes it a complex work but a valid enquiry into change and social evolution.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, Turgenev's novel, like Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, presented Friel with a faith in the potential of individuals as social engineers which he could use as part of his dramatic enquiry, examining how we can achieve a just and free life. Friel comments that for all Turgenev's vacillation, he had a social vision close to Chekhov's evolutionary vision, and that the very anthropocentricity of this is given tragic stature in the figure of Bazarov.<sup>25</sup> Friel considerably diminishes Bazarov and emboldens Arkady (a minor figure whom Fet considered 'banal' and Herzen described as a 'blancmange'). Friel's alterations, within a performance-orientated framework, retain aspects of Turgenev's novel concerned with reflecting its historical period. But transposed to the stage, much of the geography and imagery of the novel reflecting the historic exploration is lost so that the play which emerges is more a family chronicle, concerned with how one generation succeeds another and how characters cope with calls for change and continuity.

In Turgenev's hands, major characters rarely achieve their goals or personal happiness whereas minor characters (such as Arkady and Katya in *Fathers and Sons*) do because their aspirations are lower than those of the central figures. In his adaptation, Friel uses Katya and

Arkady to confront and eventually support certain values but not necessarily the established order. Dramatised, their lively courtship signifies both possibilities of change and provisional reconciliation with traditional values, a suggestion further extended by the marriage of Nikolai Kirsanov and Fenichka.

The brief examination of the novel and its history that follows, demonstrates which thematic aspects Friel lifted and transposed to the stage. It also reveals what structural alterations and additions he effected in order to achieve a performance that retained, as far as possible, the enquiry of the novel while re-creating it in the context of contemporary society.

### iii the novel, personal and political

The opening pages of Turgenev's narrative present a brief history of Nikolai Kirsanov, the birth of his son, Arkady, and a life of blissful domesticity cut short in 1847 by the death of his wife. 'He barely withstood the blow, turned grey in several weeks; was planning to go abroad in order to distract himself, if only a bit ... but then 1848 arrived' (VIII 198). Thus Kirsanov's personal world blossoms and fades only to be revived by a period of revolution, foreshadowing the novel's wider meditations. These are brought into focus in Chapter III through the eyes of his adult son, Arkady. Travelling from university to Marino, the family estate, Arkady sees a Russia of failures:

Arkady's heart tightened ... peasants ... ragged, on wretched horses; ... 'No', - thought Arkady - 'it's a poor place, it strikes you neither with its plenty nor its industry; it mustn't, it mustn't stay that way, transformations are essential ... but how to bring them about, how to begin' (VIII 205).

When Arkady's father says that spring is on its way, his son sheds his winter coat and they embrace. Such gestures signal the novel's rhythm of constant movement and its implicit recognition of the desperate need for change. Ultimately, the narrative, despite the outbursts of Bazarov, moves between provisional resolution and reconciliation of the generations after the death of Bazarov, and it is upon this interstice that Friel builds his enquiry. Like Turgenev, Friel does not allow the revolutionary *déclassé* to be triumphant in a socio-political sense since this would or could lend weight to polemics. Nevertheless, both writers do sympathise with the failed man, particularly after his rejection by Odintsova.<sup>26</sup>

The title, *Ottsy i deti* (which literally means *Fathers and Children* but is most commonly translated as *Fathers and Sons*) implies that the central opposition in the novel is between two generations, the older generation and their off-spring. But this is not so in any significant sense. There is, for example, conflict between the young trio, Bazarov, Arkady and Katya.

Katya (from a gentry background) belongs to Bazarov's generation in years only. In disposition she aligns herself with the older liberal, aristocratic generation, characterised by the Kirsanov brothers, Nikolai and Pavel, and the disorder at Marino. Arkady, Nikolai's son, is a genuine if temporary disciple of the nihilist, Bazarov. When Arkady falls in love with Katya, he decamps. This youthful trio has two very different sets of contemporaries. Representing the socially privileged are Sitnikov and Kukshina, quidnuncs and fashion-followers who also desert Bazarov. Representing the peasant class is Fenichka, the able housekeeper at Marino; she is also Nikolai's mistress and the mother of their son, Mitya. Clearly, this representative mixture of the younger generation raises much more than issues of youth, class, gender or the 'new men' and their new ideology. Through such characters Turgenev invites examination of the wider issues of government, the institutions of education, family and marriage, as well as nihilism.<sup>27</sup>

Turgenev's novel presented nineteenth century Russian literature with its first nihilist, Evgeny Vassilyich Bazarov. Written in revolutionary Paris where the author's sympathies lay unreservedly with the communes, it is dedicated to V.G. Belinsky who, along with N.A. Dobrolyubov, is the source of Bazarov's portrait. This angry, scientifically rational young man preaches the rejection of art and civilisation in a manner which in 1862 dismayed many readers. But, for a time, within the novel, there is a civil and even warm relationship between Bazarov and his host, the landed Nikolai Petrovich Kirsanov. There is also a fascination and attraction between this penniless student and the older, wealthy, discontented Anna Sergeyevna Odintsova who runs her own estate. And although both of these relationships end in estrangement, this does not make *Fathers and Sons* a novel of class conflict, an account of the *raznochinets* against the *intelligentsia*. Aspects of these two groups are, in fact, embodied in Bazarov and the author's exploration of the difference between liberalism and radicalism and between gradualism and revolution. Topical in Turgenev's time, these issues and how they affect characters attracted Friel because they raise the perennial enquiry about how to live a just and free life.

And while Turgenev examines these issues through the lives and conditions of his characters, he uses several safeguards against class polemics. Bazarov's mother, Arina Vlassiyevna Bazarova, for example, is from the gentry while his father, Vassily Ivanyich Bazarov, although a doctor, is of peasant origins. Their devout worldview is totally opposite to their son's newfound creed of nihilism. Nor does class inhibit a close and loving relationship between Arkady and Bazarov, both advocates of nihilism. Their friendship, like that of most young people, is intense, sometimes stormy and imbalanced, like their creed.



And yet herein lies yet another safeguard against class polemics — the power of love. Bazarov, who associates love with weakness, even illness, falls in love with Odintsova. Ultimately, it is not class that keeps these individuals separate but rather the ideological encodings they have absorbed, displacing and disallowing spontaneity. Parallel with this central emotional repression between Odintsova and Bazarov, there exists a tension between Bazarov and Pavel Petrovich Kirsanov. Bazarov accuses Pavel of being ‘an aristocrat’ and a dandified Superfluous Man. That their mutual intolerance is more a matter of *emotion* than of class or political ideology is revealed when Pavel challenges Bazarov to a duel for ambiguous reasons. In reality, they have both met unrequited love and it is emotional repression rather than anything else that leads them to duel, although both, in varying degrees, are attracted to Fenichka Nikolaevna. Again, Fenichka Nikolaevna is Nikolai’s housekeeper and mistress. Their relationship is constrained by shades of tradition and class issues so that while Nikolai may marry Fenichka, his servant, their marriage does not represent a resolution of class differences either on a personal or political level. Nikolai is part of the wider emancipation process. Nevertheless, when he sells part of his land to his freed serfs, he first arranges for the sale of its mature timber. The complexities besetting these times are further examined through the servants, Dunyasha and Young Peter. The latter in particular, with ‘turquoise ring in his ear [and] pomaded streaky hair’, reflects aspects of change while old Prokofyich resists any such alteration. Like Fenichka, they are peasants, but they are more than sub-plot or below stairs characters; they are representatives of the Russian people, whom Bazarov declares that he both despises and wishes to serve as a district doctor.

A common denominator among these varied characters is a sense of conflict between what they value and the changes that appear inevitable. This privileged pocket of Russian society appears to see-saw between passion and repression so that conflicting desires seem to move the action of this novel as surely as that of *A Month in the Country* (or Friel’s *Dancing at Lughnasa*). In these works, characters’ control of their passions is shown to be precarious and in *Fathers and Sons* Turgenev’s pocket pastoral is seen to be threatened constantly by contrary energies, apparently epitomised by Bazarov but, in fact, affected by forces of change gathering both from within and from outside. In common, these works are socio-historical and emotional geographies of change.

#### iv a geography of change

In *Fathers and Sons*, the need for change is written large in the Russian landscape itself, vast and impoverished. The indifferent grandeur of this natural world is juxtaposed with the

exigencies of everyday life and pockets of 'civilised' order. Odd and sometimes anachronistic reflections of this are embodied in niches of domesticity, like Fenichka's 'Gusberry' preserves, the 'big dark image of St. Nikolai the wonder-worker' in her quarters, with its 'civilised' English wash-stand but no lock on the door, or the arbour and garden surrounding the new Kirsanov house, Novaia slobodka, where, we are told, surprisingly, 'lilac and acacia had taken.' (VIII 207). In Turgenev's Russia, the arbour (*besedka*<sup>28</sup>) was an icon of cultured discourse, in the bosom of nature. In the novel the structure is open and airy but vulnerable. (In his play, Friel taps into these semantics, making the arbour Fenichka's special place of retreat (a gazebo) but also the place where Bazarov imposes upon her.) Nevertheless, whether open landscape or enclosed gardens, the land and nature depicted in the novel serve constantly to indicate the need for material and emotional change. Turgenev's arbour, for example, is contrasted with two other domestic enclosures, Pavel's study and Odintsova's manor. Both of these, like their owners, are shuttered and enclosed places. The gardens at both Marino and Nikolskoe (like the Islayev estate in *A Month in the Country*, and the gardens in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*) are richly symbolic. Such gardens are places of freedom, enquiry and change, separate from the civilising architecture of their respective houses.

#### v Turgenev's Bazarov

Turgenev's Bazarov is introduced by Arkady to the Kirsanovs as a nihilist, one who refuses to recognise authority and takes no principle on trust. In his first disagreement with Pavel, Bazarov declares: 'I have already informed you that I believe in nothing' (VI 219) and 'we act on the basis of what we recognise as useful ... At the present time there is nothing more useful than negation [so] we negate [...] Everything' (X 243). Perturbed at his son's 'mentor', Nikolai Kirsanov comments: 'You negate everything, or, to put it more accurately, you destroy everything', asking, 'But surely it is necessary to build too?' Bazarov retorts: 'Indeed, that is not our business ... the ground has to be cleared first.' For Bazarov, 'Principles is a meaningless and empty word — they don't exist' (XXI 325); philosophy is 'Romanticism', a valueless imported term, love 'is an affection' (XXV 372), and 'a decent chemist is twenty times more useful than any poet' (VI 219). The idea of Nikolai Kirsanov playing the cello or reading Pushkin (synonymous with traditional values) makes Bazarov roar with laughter (IX 236-7) and he declares that it is a waste of time and effort to study or attempt to understand individual personalities since human beings are as much alike in body and soul as a stand of trees. He objects to foreign terms but his repudiation of 'principles' is contradicted by his own actions since he acts on the basis of what he considers useful.

Bazarov cannot, in fact, negate or clear his building site without resort to some guiding principles, such as utility (his criterion for action) and experience (his criterion for truth). Read in this light, Turgenev's Bazarov has much in common with Friel's Owen. Both young men are fired with impatience and its attendant incomplete perspective.

#### vi 'ceaselessly divided, ceaselessly interfused'

As a typical *raznochinets*, Bazarov embodies an assault on the culture epitomised by Pavel Kirsanov. Their ideological skirmishes, like those of Bazarov and Arkady, parallel the novel's meditations upon culture, change and violence. However, of equal importance are the personal clashes, particularly between Bazarov and Odintsova; and between Bazarov and Arkady (which provokes the latter's account of Pavel's past). All these exchanges, which appear to air either ideological or personal differences, in fact, map out the deeper terrain of repressed passions between men and women, and their consequences, an aspect which Friel's play (through specific cuts and idiom) foregrounds with great immediacy.

Richard Freeborn argues that 'all Turgenev heroes embody ideas and aspire to emulate ideals' and he attributes to Turgenev a balancing of pessimism in the individual and optimism in the ideological.<sup>29</sup> Friel's use of Turgenev, and especially of Bazarov and Arkady, suggests that while the personal and the ideological are inextricably inter-related, changes in the individual do not necessarily lead to social transformation. In the first section of the novel Arkady implies, Pavel Kirsanov assumes and Bazarov acquiesces in the view that nihilism, the repudiation of all traditions, conventions and values of the established order, is the core of his being. Nevertheless, the subsequent sections of the novel reveal the fundamental falsity of these assumptions. In the rare case where protagonists such as Bazarov or Odintsova do gain some insight, they remain incapable of living up to any such understandings. This individual Joycean-paralysis comments upon the wider social picture. While the contrast and change of generations is the thesis of the novel, the characters and their inner conflictual conditions in this work, no less than in *A Month in the Country* or in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, are complex and layered, with Bazarov as perhaps the most obviously enigmatic. It is possible, however, to read Turgenev's Odintsova and Natalya, and Chekhov's Masha, as equally complex characters, characters in perpetual conflict with themselves. In Bazarov, for example, Turgenev concentrated the forces of *life* which the nihilist in turn rejects, (a premise much altered in Friel's Bazarov). Bazarov de-values friendship, denounces love and nature thereby making his own self-discovery and fall into love, and his denial of his parents, all the more tragic.

According to Turgenev, the wholly integrated human should combine a balance of heart and head and thereby be open to change. Quixotic and Hamletesque, absurd and tragic and overlaid with revolutionary rhetoric, Bazarov is a type not unfamiliar to the Irish dramatic tradition, particularly in the work of O'Casey (discussed later). But translated into performance for contemporary audiences, Bazarov's rejection of life as it is, irrespective of any moral superiority, would have been almost profane. Unaltered, Bazarov could be misconstrued as an unrelenting figure of revolution, akin to the martyr ethos of some 1916 Irish nationalists. Hence Friel alters and indeed emasculates Turgenev's Bazarov, promoting enquiry and accommodation and radically diminishing the nihilist's stature.

### vii a radical enquiry rewritten

Frank F. Seeley comments:

it is tempting to see *Fathers and Sons* as a drama in four acts and an epilogue, with the first three acts of approximately equal length and the fourth shorter by slightly more than one-third. 'Act I', comprising chapters I-XI might be entitled 'Bazarov and the Kirsanovs'; 'Act II' - chapters XII-XIX - could be called 'Bazarov and Odintsova'; 'Acts III and IV' - chapters XX-XXIV and XXV-XXVII - might be styled respectively as 'The Decline' and 'Fall of Bazarov'.<sup>30</sup>

This approach portrays Bazarov in the heroic and tragic terms in which Turgenev admits he drew him and replicates the novel's movement between recognition of the need for change, and provisional resolution. The fact that Friel's version does not resemble this structure at all alerts us to the fact that his use of the novel's portrayal of 'the body and pressure of time' diverges from that of its author but for specific reasons.<sup>31</sup> And while the play appears to end on a note of reconciliation, like his *Three Sisters*, Friel's *Fathers and Sons* is a drama about bringing oppositions into dialogue, away from 'old certainties.'

In Turgenev's novel Friel found more than a record of conflict between generations or classes, of nature versus culture, or socialist materialism versus illusory liberalism. He found a template examination of characters and confusions caught in a rapidly changing world. Friel re-fashions Turgenev's depiction of these issues embodied in Bazarov and re-affirms the novel's key assertion: that the nihilist, for all his active energy, is not a viable type, and that, despite their problems and confusions, Nikolai Kirsanov, Fenichka, Arkady, Katya, and the elderly Bazarovs, the mainstays of the old world, will endure. The novel contrasts the best in the older and younger generations of its time, demonstrating that the idealistic theories of the young, however admirable in the abstract, could not withstand confrontation with the realities of life.

Whereas in Friel's translation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* the speeches almost correspond one for one to those of Chekhov's play, in *Fathers and Sons* he makes major modifications to the structure and characters, adding and deleting material, and replacing whole sections of Turgenev's detailed and dense prose with idiomatically-pointed dialogue in order to condense and reorder the moderate-length novel to play length. Despite the persistence of specific motifs and details, there is some loss of scope and texture. Nevertheless, close reading shows how deftly Friel has lifted and dramatised fragments of dialogue and conditions, using them analogously to explore individual and socio-political imbalances. He reconstrues his borrowings in a manner so reminiscent of his own work that this version (albeit commissioned by an English theatre) is, as Richard Freeborn comments, 'a Frielisation', rather than a translation in the orthodox sense.<sup>32</sup> But while Friel's aim is effective communication, the question arises whether his modifications replicate Turgenev's enquiry. Or has Turgenev's enquiry been used as the raw material for a new investigation, justified in terms of Friel's audiences? As Bassnett-McGuire and Lefevere remind us, the opportunities to re-read ideological encodings and to promote paradigm shifts, vitalise the rewriting. This is the ground Friel asserts with *Fathers and Sons*, once again challenging 'old certainties' and divisions.

The tension between change and stasis, between personal desire and duty, central to the exploration at the heart of Friel's *Translations*, is the same energy that shapes his rewriting of Turgenev's novel. Many of his alterations can be explained in these terms because, like much of his own work, *Fathers and Sons*, without offering a specific agenda for change, challenges unheeding authority and the extremism it can provoke.

Frank O'Connor claims that Turgenev 'scarcely wrote a significant story that is not political'.<sup>33</sup> It is possible to argue that *Fathers and Sons*, with its ethos of contemporaneity and rejuvenation, depicts not only the political upheavals of the author's Russia but also the human struggle for equity and justice. He poses the existential questions that still resonate: Why do we exist? What is the purpose and reason for our brief lives? Why do we suffer? Is happiness possible or illusory? Such questions make it clear why Friel chose to re-vitalise this study of human nature. While dramatic skill, poetic illusory longings and 'the noise of change' ostensibly direct the novel, the larger project is the knowledge of self necessary to both individuals and nations if they are to live a free and just life. Bazarov is primarily concerned with his own individual emancipation from conformity and his rejection of stereotyped values. Friel, disillusioned with the institutional processes of change, encourages

individual effort. Much of Turgenev's work is tinged with a sadness bordering on despair. Friel's work, marked by a consciousness of the need to be humane in our relationships, encourages strategies of self-location, hope and change. His alterations to Arkady Kirsanov underline this.

Friel's play affirms the values of family, freedom and justice so that his Bazarov is not an endorsement for blood sacrifice in the name of revolution. What then, if any, is the relationship between Friel's play and Turgenev's chronicle of change and confusion, and how clearly are these issues interrogated? Some response to these questions can be gleaned from observing Friel's alterations to the novel's characters and structure.

In the play, as in the novel, Bazarov is welcomed at Marino despite the fact that he discomforts Pavel, disconcerts Nikolai and bedazzles Arkady. The tensions in the relationship between Arkady and Bazarov surface at the end of Act One, Scene One where, in their discussion of women, both young men are seen in a poor light (*FS* 19-21). Friel develops their differences in Scene Two, one month later, preparing his Arkady for an initial meeting with Katya, the younger sister of Anna Odintsov (*FS* 22ff). Through the radical condensation and re-ordering of events, in Act One, Scene Two, Friel introduces his circumspect Odintsov, Katya, and their elderly aunt, Princess Olga into the Kirsanov household. Katya and Nikolai play duets while Arkady watches. When Bazarov remarks: 'Tell [Odintsov] that I'd like to do my anatomy practical on her', Arkady retorts, 'Cut that out, Bazarov' (*FS* 22). In a very non-nihilist fashion Arkady praises Katya's playing saying, 'God, she's really a magnificent pianist', and reminisces: 'I love that piece. I remember Father and Mother playing it together when I was very small' (*FS* 23). This corresponds to an incident in *Nikolskoe* (XVI 68) but Friel's domestic *soirée* of Act One, Scene Two, is a feat of dramatic compression drawing upon over twenty chapters, including a whirlwind romance between Arkady and Katya, and Odintsov's rejection of Bazarov, who in turn pours out his pent-up emotions upon Fenichka and ends by kissing her (*FS* 58). Bazarov's imposition, in Scene One, Act Two, is observed by Pavel, who challenges Bazarov to a duel which in the novel does not occur until Chapter XXIV. This exchange, in particular, exemplifies Friel's performance-orientation. Compared with the detailed description of the novel, the play is fast-paced, moving rapidly between moments of apparent calm (the *soirée* *FS* 28) and contrasting emotional eruptions (*FS* 29). This creates jagged psychological and ideological tensions which, in the novel, epitomise the contradictions of Russian society in the nineteenth century. In the play, which is a family chronicle with socio-political implications, Friel uses

dialogue, often gapped and confused, to express characters' personal dilemmas, (particularly Bazarov's).

Turgenev's Bazarov is fiercely dismissive of Western values and talks of applying reason to understand the co-existence of wealth and privilege with poverty and injustice. Turgenev's Bazarov is a perplexed and uncertain creature psychologically but he has an ideology. Friel's Bazarov is a much less complex character psychologically and politically and this is established at the outset of the play when he allows Arkady to speak for him (*FS* 10) and when he provocatively mimics Pavel (*FS* 11) rather than talking to him directly and giving him some indication of his politics and philosophy.

Act One (especially pp 8 – 29) corresponds approximately to the central events of Chapters I – XI; Bazarov meets and is surrounded by the Kirsanovs and their differing attitudes and reactions to him. But whereas in the opening chapters of the novel Bazarov dominates, in the opening scene of the play it is Arkady who offers a rather shaky exposition of nihilism. This is subsequently expanded in Scene Two, where he declares: '[Bazarov] believes Nihilism and art are seldom compatible. I don't.' 'Whatever energies we can muster now,' he continues, 'have got to be poured into the primary and enormous task of remaking an entire society and that imperative is not only a social obligation but perhaps even a moral obligation' (*FS* 24). This declaration has its origins in Turgenev's Bazarov but, significantly, Friel gives it to Arkady. He retains but alters Bazarov's celebrated anti-individualist speech of Chapter XVI, placing it after an apparently irrelevant account by Princess Olga of how to 'break in a difficult young horse' (*FS* 25). There is the suggestion that the nihilist and the young horse are somehow synonymous or that the nihilist's view of people is like the Princess's view of horses. Friel's Bazarov declares: 'all men are similar physically and intellectually. Each has a brain, a spleen, heart, lungs. Intellectually? — darker and lighter shadings, that's all. We're like trees in the forest. Ask any botanist. Know one birch, know them all.' Like his original, he insists that it is unequal conditions that mark humans as different (*FS* 25). Thus Friel casts his Bazarov as an ill-informed youth, using Turgenev's portrayal not to air anti-individualism but rather to suggest the common human condition and the importance of equal civil rights. Moreover, in keeping with the ambivalence of the original, Friel undercuts Bazarov's call for universal equality by having him hail Dunyasha, the servant, as 'the most wholesome and uncomplicated birch-tree in the whole of Russia ... beautiful and desirable' (*FS* 26). As F.F. Seeley suggests, the incident is ridiculous in terms of Turgenev's world and reception.<sup>34</sup> But, within a contemporary context, Friel's Bazarov's words function as a caution against entrenched views *and* unrealistic idealism. Bazarov's

claim, almost like an affront to Odintsov, provokes strong reactions all round. Arkady addresses the servant saying, 'Don't listen to him, Dunyasha, Uncle Pavel says he's a bletherskite.' Dunyasha responds by repeating the colloquialism (*FS* 26). And while Seeley is correct in suggesting that neither the incident nor the idiom would occur in genteel Russian society, Friel uses it to trigger a moral debate between Odintsov and Bazarov. The nihilist insists that there is a difference between a good and a bad person, 'just as there is a difference between a sick and a healthy person' (*FS* 26), and, like another Covey or Skinner, identifies the culprit as social conditions:

The man with tuberculosis has the same kind of lungs as you and I but they are in a different condition; and as medicine advances we know how to correct that condition. Moral disease, moral imbalance has different causes - our education system, religious superstition, heredity, the polluted moral atmosphere our society breathes. But remake society and you eradicate *all* disease (*FS* 26)

Here, Church and State are inculcated by Friel's student. Moreover, this exchange is used to argue that language is power and should relate to people's experience. Bazarov attacks forms of 'government' which, through the use of language, create divisions and entrenched privilege: 'in our remade society the words stupid and clever, good and bad, will have lost the meaning you invest them with' (*FS* 26). Bazarov delivers this outburst like a lecture in social engineering but the music and civil repartee continue uninterrupted. Frustrated and confused, Bazarov asks, 'do they not play polkas in the houses of the gentry?', highlighting the issues that Friel is actually addressing (*FS* 26). Odintsov does not engage directly with Bazarov. She deflects his criticism of her class by asking his 'disciple' Arkady, 'What do you think?' but turns her attention back to Bazarov. Arkady, who has just called Bazarov a 'bletherskite', now declares that he agrees with Bazarov. Friel further demonstrates Arkady's wavering nature by having Odintsov ask him for some more ice-cream. He 'jumps to his feet, eager to serve' and, using his father's catchword, says, 'Wonderful, isn't it? I made it myself. Ice-cream, Uncle Pavel' (*FS* 26). It is as though Odintsov is able to undercut Bazarov simply by allowing Arkady to serve her with ice cream, a substance signifying their common privileged position. When Odintsov comments that he is 'a very nice young man' and 'a good dancer' (*FS* 27), she completely undercuts Arkady's ideological credibility.<sup>35</sup> Ironically, Bazarov reinforces this when he observes that his friend is completely 'unbalanced' by Odintsov (*FS* 27). For a moment it appears as though the whole ideological debate is to be swept aside with ice cream, music and dance, but Friel bridges the gap between the ideological and the personal by having Bazarov ask Anna what she believes in.



When she replies, 'Routine; order; discipline', he retorts: 'that's how you conduct your life, not what you believe in' (*FS* 27-28). This is a telling fragment of dialogue distilled from Chapter XVII and XVIII of the novel, where Odintsova's life, like the avenue of trees leading up to her house, is pruned and ordered 'like moving along on rails.' Bazarov asks Anna if this is because she has no beliefs or passion. 'Passion', she replies, 'is a luxury. I make no excursions outside what I know and can handle' (*FS* 28) and expands these sentiments, telling Bazarov of her father and her first marriage (distilled from Chapters XV (60-61) and XVII (70 ff). This account gives audiences a genuine understanding of, perhaps even a sympathy for Anna. It is interesting that Friel (who refers to the character as Odinstov) retains Odintsova's personal history thereby revealing aspects of her psychology and repressed nature whereas he omits comparable details regarding the childhood of Natalya Islayev in *A Month in the Country* (a point discussed later). But Friel's Bazarov is neither swayed nor impressed and accuses her of offering him 'the kind of rags-to-riches novelette that someone like Dunyasha, or indeed the very nice young Arkady, would probably find irresistible' (*FS* 29). Shocked, Odintsov goes to leave but Bazarov's true feelings surface in an eruption of repressed emotions (*FS* 29), observed by Pavel. Speaking in French, the language of polite society, Pavel attempts to restore calm. Odintsov responds asking Pavel what he is reading. When he replies, 'Mrs. Anna Ward Radcliffe. A simple lady. But it kills time. Harmlessly' (*FS* 29), Pavel, the voice of ameliorating humanism, brings to a close the dialogue and tension between Bazarov and Odintsov. Here Friel indicates Pavel's empathy with Odintsov by having him refer to the English author as 'Anna' whereas elsewhere she is referred to simply as 'Mrs. Ann Ward Radcliffe' (for example, see *FS* 64). The tension between Bazarov and Odinstov is further submerged with more ice-cream and Katya's talk about puppies (*FS* 30-31). The scene is further defused by Fenichka's enquiry, 'When are the boys leaving?' and Nikolai reaffirms his belief in family values, explaining that 'Bazarov is finally going to his parents' (*FS* 31). Act One Scene Two closes with the departure of Anna and Katya and the restoration of 'order' firmly re-established so that when Bazarov leaves for his parents' home, it is almost as though he is expelled. Thus, Friel's somewhat abrupt compression of dialogue and action seems to emphasise a need for change, largely articulated by Arkady and not Bazarov. Friel's alterations also serve to underline the fact that beneath a semblance of decorum in this polite society, emotional tensions and repressions persist. Friel retains but alters Turgenev's exploration of these differing personal and ideological tensions within the three households.

The issues of social order and family life examined in Chapters XX and XXI are condensed into Act One, Scene Three. Vassily Bazarov (like Nikolai Kirsanov before him) listens indulgently to Arkady's views before enquiring if his own son, Bazarov, is serious about the 'revolutionary stuff that he was spouting last night ... all that rubbish' (*FS* 40). Vassily confesses, 'I idolize my son. So does his mother. We both do. Worship him.' He is, for Père Bazarov, 'an extra-ordinary man [who] cannot be judged by ordinary standards. An extraordinary man creates his own standards' (*FS* 41-42). This dialogue (which approximates to Chapter XXI 96-100), although slightly repetitive in places, both underlines the unquestioning awe and devotion in which these parents hold their son (a situation mirrored in the Nikolai-Arkady relationship) and suggests something of the danger of myth-making. A gulf exists between Friel's Russian fathers and sons — a pattern repeated in virtually every play since *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* Moreover, Friel's audiences see that Bazarov is *not* an extraordinary man, and the dramatist shows that standards are common and shared rules.

As indicated above, in the previous scene Friel built an ideological and emotional gulf between Odintsov and Bazarov (*FS* 26-29), whereby each character tested the others' beliefs. With the same compression, a similar schism is opened up between Bazarov and Arkady (*FS* 44-45). This approximates to Turgenev's students' haystack conversation and Vassily's 'Castor and Pollux' interruption of this in Chapter XXI (104-5). In the play, this truth-telling test is built steadily through three statements by Bazarov (*FS* 44, 45, 46). In these Bazarov accuses Arkady of loving the old Russia and being someone who will probably end up 'in his big house' (*FS* 44). Bazarov claims that despite the fact that a month earlier Arkady was 'preaching the dismantling of the whole apparatus of state' (in Scene One), he has 'deep-seated domestic attachments' (*FS* 45), concluding that when the Kirsanov family and all that they represent are criticised, Arkady reverts 'to the old cultural stereotype.' 'We're witnessing,' declares Bazarov, 'the death of a Nihilist and the birth, no, the rebirth of a very nice liberal gentleman' (*FS* 46). Here, with great economy, Friel has Bazarov foretell the rest of the play: the personal and social confusions, the muddled moves towards reconciliation and change, and the death of Bazarov himself. Friel's alterations are incisive. They establish and keep the unresolved tensions alive so that this confrontation and parting between the two friends can surface again in Act Two (*FS* 67-68).

Friel achieves this by apparently bringing Bazarov to heel (agreeing to join his parents in the singing of the *Te Deum*) but only in order to allow him to bolt from their loving care. Thus, Bazarov is seen to kow-tow to the very values he castigates in Arkady — faith, hearth and home (*FS* 46-47) — but his agreement to join in the *Te Deum* is bought at a high price.

He agrees only in order to leave. Apparently an act of tolerance and accommodation, this will be returned to later when, after his death, Bazarov's parents again take refuge in a *Te Deum* (FS 80).

All of these personal and ideological tensions (the gaps opened up between Bazarov and Pavel, between Odintsov and Arkady, between Bazarov and his parents, between Bazarov and the servants) have their source in Turgenev. Together they constitute Turgenev's exploration into the contradictions of his old Russia and the changes shaping the new society. But Friel cuts and re-orders them into ideological and the emotional joustings, creating dialogue that reveals an imbalance of hearts and heads. In the play between these, at the close of Act One, the nihilist is *momentarily* made into a prophet and then reduced to a tractable son at the end of that Act. By the end of Scene Two, Act Two the stage directions indicate that this character is 'now a fully mature young man ... his manner is brisk, efficient, almost icy' (FS 66). Thus Friel signposts the real parting between Arkady and Bazarov. Significantly, Nikolai plays Beethoven's Romance in F-major, Op. 50 off-stage; it seems to remind Arkady of the traditional values represented by his father, their home and Katya. The ideological distance that opened up between the two friends in the previous Act is brought sharply into focus when Bazarov says, 'as you told your uncle a long, long time ago we're long past the stage of social analysis. We are now', he declares, 'into the era of hostilities — of scratching, hurting, biting, mauling, cutting, bruising, spitting.' Bazarov is 'committed to the last, mean, savage, glorious, shaming extreme', but tells Arkady, 'you're not equipped for those indecencies', insinuating that his friend's upbringing precludes him joining in such a fight (FS 67). At points such as this, it is clear Friel has retained much of the ambivalence of Turgenev's nihilist in his Bazarov. But, it is equally clear why Friel does not allow such a man to be his spokesperson.

In part, Bazarov's choice of an ideological life and pragmatic activity, as opposed to a balance of heart and head, is used by Friel to reduce the anarchist's effect. Bazarov is diminished by his outbursts (FS 27, 28, 29, 44-45 and 46) and reduced to 'stirring political discussions' and 'student banter' (FS 70), for ultimately the nihilist's emotional repressions (and lack of political coherence) undo him (FS 53-54). Moreover, after the duel, Pavel is magnanimous and Arkady enhanced so that he can, with some justification, say that Bazarov 'can't show affection easily' (FS 65).

This particular realisation comes to Arkady long after Bazarov's opening attack, accusing him of imagining that he loves the peasants (FS 44). Setting himself up in opposition to Arkady, Bazarov declares, 'I know I hate them. But I know, too, that when the time comes I

will risk everything, everything for them' (*FS* 44). For Bazarov, 'life is ridiculous', and the difference between himself and his father, and between Arkady and himself is their ignorance of this fact. In these exchanges, Friel brings the different perspectives of the two students into focus through dialogue that reveals their ideas of concepts such as love, hate, justice and freedom. From their talk, it is possible to deduce that the relationship will not last because the young men do not share the same values. Drawing upon both worlds, Turgenev's and his own, Friel brings these tensions into contemporary hearing and in line with the increasing pressures encapsulated in Act Two. Nevertheless, his students are products of his dramatic constraints and, therefore, lack much of the novel's socio-historical considerations and encodings. Act Two, for example, radically condenses Chapters XII-XIX and omits the students' intermezzo in the capital of the province, their acquaintance with the quidnuncs Sitnikov and Kukshina (XII-XIII); the governor's ball where the students meet Anna Sergeyevna Odintsova and her young sister, Katya (XIV), and their subsequent visits to Nikolskoe, Odintsova's estate.

In the novel, Nikolskoe, a symbolic geography of disciplined order markedly different to Marino, is the site of several intensely passionate, if repressed encounters between Odintsova and Bazarov (XV, XVI XVII, XVIII XIX). In these chapters, the novel uncovers their emotional and psychological complexity and, to a lesser degree, that of Arkady. But whereas this charged triangle features strongly in the novel, it appears little in the play and then only to expose chinks in the students' nihilist philosophy. For example, the Odintsova-Bazarov exchanges at Nikolskoe are concentrated into Friel's Kirsanov-verandah *soirée* (in Act One Scene Two) with intensity sacrificed by the dramatist for reasons of focus, re-orientation and compression. In the play, Nikolskoe and all the 'civilised' order it represents, is simply implied.

Structurally Chapter XIX is a turning point for Turgenev's Bazarov. Confused and rejected, he tells Arkady that they 'both behaved like fools', that romantic love emasculates but that 'the man who's furious at his illness [is] sure to get over it' (XIX 88). The students leave Nikolskoe to visit the elderly Bazarovs, continuing their discussions about the debilitating effects of love (XX). Subsequently, Bazarov declares, 'I haven't crushed myself, so a skirt can't crush me' (XXI 102). Chapters XIX, XX and XXI reveal differences and conflict over established, traditional values and those held by the students. These differences build to the point where Bazarov baits Arkady saying, 'Let's really quarrel for once till we're both laid out dead, until we're destroyed at last' (XXI 105). These powerful lines, apparently endorsing violence, are omitted by Friel. The novel describes how Arkady 'instinctively felt

afraid' but describes how their 'collision' is interrupted by Vassily Ivanovich who ironically comments: 'you have so much strength, such youth in bloom, such abilities, such talents! Positively, Castor and Pollux' (XXI 106). All of this is compressed by Friel into the four Bazarov statements of attack examined above (*FS* 44-45, 53, 54 and 67). In the novel the students' stay at the elderly Bazarovs' is cut short so that they return to Marino. In the play their departure is equally imminent. Coming just before a quick blackout at the end of Act One, it appears almost abrupt because although still together, the students are most definitely in separate camps (*FS* 47; cf. Chapters XXV and XXVI).

And it is between Friel's two acts that he makes a decisive change in focus. In the novel Odintsova has an attack of 'spleen.' In the play at the beginning of Act Two, Scene One, she is at Marino and putting the estate in order. These alterations are significant. Friel's women, and the environments they create, are decidedly constructive in their efforts, especially Anna Odintsov, Katya and Fenichka. Thus Friel emphasises positive female energies, using Turgenev's work to present a society that is capable of reform and order, and where civility and accommodation are pre-requisites to existence.

#### viii re-reading the social contours

In Turgenev's novel, the emotional and ideological turbulence of the students echoes the unsettled conditions at Marino: serfs become disaffected, horses are stolen or sicken, a harness falls to pieces, a threshing machine is ruined the first time it is used (XXII). Read in these terms, the world of Marino has much in common with the Baile Beag of *Translations* and for similar reasons.

In the play, Friel condenses this psycho-social disarray into intermittent outbursts of frustration on the part of Nikolai, generally directed towards the selectively deaf Piotr. The latter has been singled out by critics as wholly unconvincing in the Russian context. But, like other Friel characters of dis-identification, such as Doalty or the Donnelly twins in *Translations*, Skinner in *The Freedom of the City* and Father Jack in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Piotr functions well as a thorn in the side of the established order. Deliberately disruptive, he is an unruly 'servant' and an individual figure of change. Friel also indicates the disorder on the Kirsanov estate by giving Nikolai an echoic catch-phrase about organising their lives (*FS* 8, 14, 49, 88, 94), similar in function to Tusenbach's 'to coin a phrase' in *Three Sisters*. And similar to Islayev's use of 'astonishing' in *A Month in the Country*, Friel's Nikolai makes frequent and inappropriate use of the adjective 'wonderful' to gloss over increasingly problematic situations (*FS* 4, 5, 9, 52, 89). Initially, audiences might well interpret Nikolai's

repetitions of 'wonderful' and his calls for 'organisation' (FS 88, 94) as simply irritating speech-habits. But, later, when 'wonderful' is used by *both* Arkady and Pavel, this word and other catchphrases echo, gather significance and signal that the older and younger generations are in fact moving through difficulties towards some sort of dialogue. (Similar use of repetitions and music is apparent in *Three Sisters*, *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *A Month in the Country*, creating a poetry of fracture which has to be 'completed' by audiences.)

In addition to these emotional-linguistic gaps, Friel also uses music to signal unspoken desires, potential changes or developments. Whereas Turgenev uses the music of Mozart in the novel, Friel uses Beethoven. The emotional power of the Romances lends an air of nostalgia and fragility early in Act One Scene One. Played again in Act Two Scene One, this music echoes and recalls the same sense of fragility, serving as a warning (akin to similar effects in *A Month in the Country*). The song, 'Drink to me only', is used to recall Nikolai's dead wife but also, when Nikolai and Katya sing it at the end of the play, to replace the epilogue and signal that Katya will maintain the Kirsanov values. The fact that neither Fenichka nor Arkady joins in this singing (FS 95) can be interpreted as a degree of dissent or dis-identification. More likely, their different responses indicate potential changes in marriages, families and society at large. And in this way, they keep the ending open rather than suggesting a total restoration of the old way of life with the death of Bazarov (FS 91). In a similar manner, Friel's use of music and props (such as the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe) serves to indicate emotional gaps and how these can be addressed. Thus, when Fenichka gives Pavel copies of *The Romance in the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, he comments that they are 'absolutely wonderful [written by the] darling, innocent Mrs. Ann Ward Radcliffe' (FS 94)<sup>36</sup> Earlier, Pavel had told Odintsov that reading Mrs. Radcliffe helped him kill time harmlessly (FS 29). Thus, in Friel's play, music, literature and even silence, are devices which (as in Chekhov) provide the means whereby people keep uncertainty at bay. It appears that Pavel's response echoes his brother's schemes to get 'organised' but his English novels, like Nikolai's 'wonderful' new waistcoat (and Arkady Islayev's 'wonderful new winnowing machine') are in fact anodynes, self-constructed defences against the disorder of life. Nikolai's catch-phrases and apparently tangential remarks, like Pavel's stiff-backed *hauteur*, are strategies aimed at *preserving* genial, even civilised, relations within the family.

Friel has absorbed and re-deployed these devices with considerable effect in his versions of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and *A Month in the Country*. In all three rewritings there is a consistent substitution of equivalent *signifié*, of geographical references and symbols which give historical weight and contemporary resonance to the

dialogue, talking directly to modern audiences. In the novel, there is the strong suggestion that these two contexts, the psychological and the geographical contours, like the two fundamentals, stasis and movement, are never absolutely separated. In some respects, this suggested inter-relationship resembles the ties that bind many rural communities to faith and fatherland as reflected in many Irish dramas. Ultimately, Turgenev uses his geography to illustrate the different paths taken by the two young men in the novel and locates Bazarov's grave in the heart of the Russian countryside. But Friel's play, especially with Arkady's outburst regarding Bazarov, ends on a much more troubled note, despite the marriages.

In the play, the emotional struggle between these two characters is not so much supplanted as replaced by Friel's focus on the developments between Arkady and Katya. Turgenev's Katya is a 'new' woman who can bear anything except "inequality" (XXV 137). She has, like her sister, intelligence and desires. But, unlike her sister, Katya is prepared to explore the uncharted territory of passion and does not insist that 'order is needed in everything' (XVI 69).<sup>37</sup> Friel exaggerates these differences and makes his Katya almost as lively a character as Dunyasha and, therefore, totally different to the Turgenev original. Thus he establishes his own points of contrast between characters and, read in an Irish context, the play suggests that it is through young people like Katya that developments, perhaps even peace, will be possible. This enquiry into the possibilities of change courses throughout the novel, initiated in the early chapters in discussions between Arkady and his father, and subsequently expanded in the forays between Bazarov and the Kirsanovs, and between the students and pseudo-radical-intellectuals like Sitnikov and Kukshina.

#### ix excluding Sitnikov and Kukshina

In Chapters XII and XIII, Turgenev uses Sitnikov and Kukshina for purposes of contrast with Arkady and particularly Bazarov. Through descriptions of their affected dress, dwellings and dialogue, Turgenev explores the shadows surrounding contemporary issues, such as nihilism and 'the woman question.' Kukshina sets herself up as a 'new woman', an "*émancipée*". But she is a sham just as Sitnikov is a freeloader. Together they drop the name of authors such as George Sand and Emerson, and talk of leaving for Paris and Heidelberg (the European centres of debate). Inebriated, their 'debate [as to] whether marriage [is] a prejudice or a crime, and whether or not men were born equal or not, and precisely what individuality consists in', ends in a drunken carousing of sentimental songs so that finally Arkady remarks, 'this has turned into something like Bedlam' (XIII 55). The whole episode emphasises the false 'values' of Sitnikov and Kukshina.

Turgenev used his pseudo-intellectuals and the Governor's ball (XIV) to examine tensions within the *intelligentsia*, social affectations, bureaucratic corruption and the students' response to these as well as their naïve response to Anna Odintsova. For reasons of focus and compression, however, Sitnikov and Kukshina, with their clamorous tone and pseudo-tenets, and the Governor's ball are omitted by Friel. The ball is recreated in a condensed, new form by Friel as an after-dinner moment of spontaneity, a dance on the verandah of the Kirsanov household in Act One Scene Two (discussed earlier). For reasons of compression Friel also omits almost all of the parallels between journeying and change but indicates something of these tensions in the gapped dialogue and sudden mood swings. He omits the metaphors of the wild and tame encapsulated in Turgenev's animal and bird imagery, used to comment upon not only the changes that face these characters but also the estates of Nikolskoe and Marino. Friel's compression emphasises that his concerns centre around the complexities of communication and how communication can bring about change. Hence Friel's play pares Turgenev's text down to a focus on three families, their inter-relationships and how they cope with inevitable change. Nevertheless, these family complexities have wider socio-political implications.

#### **x including the locals**

At the outset, Friel's play appears to focus not so much upon the past for its own sake as upon less complex times than our own. Friel places Fenichka outside in the garden (traditionally symbolising the Russian motherland) where she is free of the civilising constraints and class structure represented by the house. He positions Nikolai (a representative of the gentry and 'the men of the 40s') inside, playing Beethoven's Romance in F-major Op 50, on his cello, music he used to play for his dead wife. Outside, Fenichka talks to her fellow servant friend, the earthy Dunyasha, who says she is dazzled by the new farm manager, Adam, and talks of the dances and young men in the past, declaring that now there are only half-drunk louts, 'clod-hoppers' and 'old leechers' who describe her as 'a powerful armful of meat' (*FS* 2). None of this dialogue is found in Turgenev. But here, at the outset of Act One, Friel's localisation and particularisation give audiences a sense of rural stasis, lost opportunities and the need for change.

The opening dialogue, intimate and between close friends, indicates social divisions and emotional repressions and these are inferentially linked with the entrance of Pavel Kirsanov. Dunyasha exclaims, 'Jesus, here comes the Tailor's Dummy. He must have spotted you' (*FS* 2). Here, Friel compresses the class and personal dynamics of several chapters, (especially



Chapter VIII 26-29) and transposes these issues to the very beginning of his play, compressing them into a fragment of dialogue whereby Pavel asks Fenichka to order him some green tea. He thanks her in French and, turning to her baby (his brother's child) and, apparently speaking to the enfant, he says '*Tu es très belle*' (FS 3). Although one would always use *tu* to a baby, his use of the female form of address suggests that he is, in fact, addressing the remark to Fenichka and using French to conceal his feelings. This is the first of many such gaps in exchanges between Pavel and Fenichka (FS 4, 70, 82, 83, 93) and the development of both characters plays a significant part in Friel's play (discussed later).

The gapped dialogue between Pavel and Fenichka exists in striking contrast to the emotionally charged exchanges between Bazarov and Anna Odintsov (FS 24, 26-29, 48-49, 52-54). By the end of Act Two, however, it appears that Pavel's repressed passion, like that of Odintsov, develops into a form of acceptance once Bazarov is gone, and both Nikolai and Fenichka and Arkady and Katya are about to marry. Friel's dramatic compression appears to drive the play towards this conclusion. At this point, however, it is possible to state that these marriages only take place after the running of the Marino estate has been put in order, and in this regard Friel's Odintsov (a figure of order and discipline) is a key player (FS 50).

#### xi Friel's women

Friel juxtaposes Odintsov's willingness and ability to assist Nikolai Kirsanov to order his life and her relationship with the love-struck Bazarov (FS 48-49, 52-54). Towards the end of Act Two a turbulent exchange between Odintsov and Bazarov effectively replaces Chapters XXV and XXVI, which culminate in Odintsova's realisation, 'This man loves me!' (XXVI 147). Friel illustrates Bazarov's overflow of emotion by having him use the word, 'chasm', six times. Utterly distraught, Bazarov exclaims that a chasm has opened up inside of him and, declaring 'I'm mad about you, Anna Sergeyevna, hopelessly, insanely, passionately, extravagantly, madly in love with you', he kisses her (FS 54). Anna's response is retreat; he has, she says, 'misunderstood the whole situation.' The rejection is clear and almost as abrupt as Katya's and Arkady's sudden, joyous intrusion. Their buoyancy has the effect of casting Bazarov into deeper confusion, and the contrast between their natural affection and Bazarov's thwarted pursuit of Odintsov is used by Friel not to explain away Bazarov's subsequent imposition upon Fenichka but to emphasise the young nihilist's personal ambivalence and its impact upon others (FS 56). In doing so, Friel remains close to his source.

Trapped in his own confusion, Friel's Bazarov retreats to the gazebo (FS 54), where he is found by Fenichka. Almost immediately Bazarov asks Fenichka to talk to him 'about chasms

and relationships.’ In counterpoint, the emotional phrasing of ‘Beethoven’s Romance for violin and orchestra in G-major, Op 40’ wafts from the house. ‘Nikolai is blessed’, Bazarov comments, and then admits ‘that’s a strange word for me to use - blessed ... I think it’s because you generate goodness. ... You’re equipping me with a new vocabulary, Fenichka!’ (FS 56-7). The music stops abruptly, signalling that Bazarov’s words are inappropriate, that they should have been addressed to Anna Odintsov. Instead, Bazarov kisses Fenichka, ostensibly in payment for the drops he prescribed for her baby earlier in the play. Pavel sees this, challenges him to a duel and the scene ends in a flurry of accusations about jealousy, overheard by Nikolai. In fact, neither Pavel nor Bazarov has been totally truthful so that their exchange only heightens the play’s general atmosphere of repressed emotions and disorder.

This sense of disorder threatens to continue into Act Two Scene Two. Piotr gives a garbled account of the duel. Old Prokofyich announces that ‘the guest room is empty - at last’ and jovially but maliciously suggests that perhaps Bazarov’s mattresses need to be ‘fumigated’ (FS 60). Dunyasha announces that she is thinking of leaving. This flurry of activity is intensified with the arrival of Arkady and Nikolai, fussing over the wounded Pavel. It is apparent that all sorts of codes, not just hospitality, have been broken. (The sense of repressed emotional truths and confusion in this scene is very similar to the map-finding sequence in *A Month in the Country*, Act Two, Scene Two, 87ff. In both plays, Friel shows the impact of the two students’ behaviour upon others.) Here, the injured Pavel declares, ‘it was my fault entirely. We had a political disagreement ... about Robert Peel’ (FS 63-64). This is a lie. Later, when Piotr does not respond to Nikolai’s call and Pavel says, ‘I don’t think he heard you’, Nikolai explodes, ‘that’s a damned lie! And you know that’s a damned lie!’ It is clear he is referring to the reason Pavel gave for the duel, and not Piotr’s selective hearing. Pavel feigns a lack of understanding. Friel has Arkady suggest that ‘[Nikolai] never really warmed to Bazarov’ thus linking the outburst to its proper cause, Bazarov, even if obliquely. There is a strong suggestion that this family, as a result of Bazarov’s visit, have rallied their disparate views in order to resist the changes and moods Bazarov appears to engender. (There is the same sense of family life preserved in the face of disorder in *A Month in the Country*). In *Fathers and Sons*, it is inevitable, therefore, that once Friel’s Kirsanov and Odintsov families close ranks, Bazarov will leave.

## xii a different Bazarov

Turgenev’s Bazarov is undoubtedly altered, even diminished, by Friel. This is reflected in several critical interpretations of Friel’s Bazarov as simply a ‘fanatic.’<sup>38</sup> Robert Cushman,

for example, having acknowledged his ignorance of the novel, praised ‘the unusual density’ of the play and recognised that Friel’s Arkady is his father’s son and all that this implies within the play. Friel’s alterations to Arkady and, particularly Bazarov, are made clear in Act Two. Before the duel, Bazarov rubbishes the values of families such as the Kirsanovs without offering any alternative. He is, in this sense, an anarchist and, to Friel’s way of thinking, not capable of questioning and acting out strategies for change. If Turgenev’s Bazarov was a figure representative of the *raznochintsy*, then Friel’s Bazarov, throughout Act One, is much less developed. In the first half of the novel, Bazarov is the embodiment of nihilistic will and purpose. In the second half, like many other Turgenev characters before him, he comes upon uncharted territory — love. Transposed to the contemporary stage, these extremes of ideology and emotion are radically altered by Friel to reaffirm the complexities of human relationships and the need for constant enquiry into how best individual and social relations may develop.

Accordingly when Friel’s Bazarov re-appears after the duel, just prior to his departure, he is (as indicated above) completely altered (*FS* 66). This development from student nihilist to mature young man is Friel’s invention and a key factor in the context of his overall dramatic schema of change and growth. On one level, the apparent maturation of Bazarov explains Friel’s devalorisation of Turgenev’s nihilist and re-presentation of him as an angry young man who needed to grow up. On another, it indicates the conscious thrust of Friel to create a play emphasising the possibilities of change. But equally, this central intervention endorses the values of hearth and home. And while the overall enquiry of the play centres around personal and social perspectives inherent in the novel, Friel’s *Fathers and Sons*, although radical in its alterations, is the most conservative of his three Russian rewritings, enquiring into the complexities of communication and change. Part of the reason for this lies in the ‘page to stage’ transposition and the fact that the work was initially commissioned for English audiences. Friel uses much of the socio-political dialogue of Turgenev’s novel but, with the change in genre, he is unable to incorporate the author’s detailed landscape and nature passages, which, in effect, often reflect or emphasise individuals’ psycho-social dispositions and changes which, in turn, relate to aspects of upheaval in wider society. Friel’s caution is apparent in his refashioning of Bazarov, turning him into a much less complicated and less explosive character than the original. The reasons for this may well relate to Friel’s own socio-political experiences, heightening his desire to endorse the value of communion and relationships rather than exclusion and nihilistic antagonisms, epitomised by the undiluted Bazarov. Friel’s rewriting of Bazarov was shaped by his awareness that a revolutionary

figure could be dismissed as stereotypical unless he could present an ideology that was capable of recognising differences and not simply intent upon replacing one set of 'convictions' with another. Consequently, he re-created Turgenev's Bazarov as a figure driven by personal frustrations, a disposition that relates to but is ultimately incapable of resolving the wider socio-political context – a nightmare 'era of hostilities' (*FS* 67).

In Chapter XXVII, for example, Bazarov tells Arkady, 'you're not made for our bitter, rough, lonely existence. There's no daring, no hate in you, but you've the dash of youth and the fire of youth. Your sort, you gentry, can never get beyond refined submission, or refined indignation.' Arkady, he says, 'won't fight [because] our dust would get into your eyes, our mud would bespatter you, and you're not up to our level, you're admiring yourselves unconsciously ... we want something else! we want to smash other people!' He concludes: 'You're a good fellow, but you're a mild, liberal gentleman for all that' (XXVI 148). Friel alters this speech, condensing it so that his Bazarov says, 'by Christmas you and Katya will probably be married ... From your point of view, you're making all the sensible choices because instinctively you know you're not equipped for our harsh and bitter and lonely life. ... Of course you have courage and of course you have your honest passion. But it's a gentleman's courage and a gentleman's passion. You are not concerned about "difficult issues".' Finally he jibes: 'the world won't be remade by discussion and mock battles at dawn ... we're long past the stage of social analysis. We are now into the era of hostilities' (*FS* 67). The end of Friel's play demonstrates that neither a 'bitter, rough, lonely existence' nor mild liberalism can engender change or bring about accommodation of differences.

### xiii changing geography

In Friel's transposition of Turgenev's novel from page to stage, characters, places, descriptive incidents and plot-lines have been omitted, and scenes have been invented to create a play of discovery through change. This journey centres around the movement towards personal conscience and participation in life; it involves the simultaneous recognition that the validity of self needs must include recognition of the validity of those of others. Such a journey occurs in both Turgenev and Friel with characters acquiring moral flexibility (not indifference) towards the self and others, a balance of heart and head.

Friel takes Turgenev's images of journeying and turns them into his play's central conceit, which is that divisions can be overcome and differences reconciled through change and growth. Friel does not romanticise the complexities of the novel nor does he completely

refashion them into an ameliorative play of accommodation. Nevertheless, he transforms and subverts the heroic possibilities of Turgenev's Bazarov in terms of both plot and character.

Friel's Arkady introduces Bazarov as one who 'begins by questioning all received ideas and principles.' But, significantly, it is *Arkady* who exclaims: 'we know there is starvation and poverty; we know our politicians take bribes; we know the legal system is corrupt. We know all that. And we are tired listening to the "liberals" and the "progressives", drawing us towards the conclusion that "the world must be made anew"' (*FS* 10; 11). These are the words of (universal) frustrated youth. It is through such speeches by Arkady and, similarly, Bazarov's declaration that they are now in the time of 'hostilities' (*FS* 67) that Friel illustrates his awareness of the forces of change recorded in the novel, forces which echo the thinking of radicals such as Herzen, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. Near the end of the play, Arkady draws his friend like another Pearsean paradigm and declares that he will remember Bazarov by devoting his life to him and 'to his beliefs and his philosophy ... to carrying out his revolution' (*FS* 91-92). But no such thing will happen because whereas Turgenev's Bazarov was driven by an ideology, Friel strips his Bazarov of any such conviction or followers. The end of the play indicates that Arkady will marry and set about managing the Kirsanov property. And herein lies one of the clearest indications of Friel's use of Turgenev. In a contemporary situation, and against the current Irish situation, Friel clearly felt that Turgenev's Bazarov, reliant to the point of indifference to others, was far too ambivalent and too volatile a character to unleash upon audiences. Instead, he focuses upon possibilities of change and refashions Arkady as a figure of reform, suggesting a positive connection between the individual running of the estate and wider society. Michael Coveney remarks, 'You cannot blame Friel for missing the inimitable texture of Turgenev, for this is not in his sights. He elucidates aspects of this book — one of the greatest of its period — and writes it into his own style and concerns. No adaptor can do more.'<sup>39</sup> Coveney might have added that the central difference (apart from the constraints imposed by the change in genre) is the shift in belief embodied in the different Bazarovs. Friel's play may well have been commissioned by the National Theatre in London but, as Said reminds us, all texts reflect something of the 'somewhere' of their inscription. In my opinion, Turgenev's Bazarov, without alteration, would have been compared not to a vision of individual self-reliability but to a modern-day terrorist with his death perceived as part of a triumphalist myth, a characterisation and ethos to which Friel has never subscribed. Friel's Bazarov and Arkady can, in some respects, be compared to Skinner and Michael in *The Freedom of the City*, another play examining civil equality and justice. Like Skinner, Bazarov insists that the language they hear does not reflect

their experience and that social circumstances enervate rather than alleviate the human condition. All four of these characters are shaped by circumstances which audiences are challenged to question.

#### xiv critical response

The critical response to the Lyttelton production of Friel's adaptation (directed by Michael Rudman) falls into two camps. Critics either like Robert Cushman declare their ignorance of the novel and admit to being impressed with the play's concentrated focus upon the students, 'committed to the cause of the peasants (a cause that the peasants themselves hardly know exists)',<sup>40</sup> or like Jeremy Kingston<sup>41</sup> and Julian Graffy, appear familiar with Turgenev's novel and, in general, are captious about Friel's alterations. Julian Graffy, initially complementary, ends on a sweeping and totally damning note saying, 'all Turgenev's analyses are acute, subtle and original, and all Friel's additions are coarse and trivial.'<sup>42</sup> One of the more comprehensive responses to the play considered the alterations and constraints besetting Friel as adaptor and commented upon both the setting and the programme notes as well as the text. Richard Allen Cave found that there were 'decided weaknesses' about both the Lyttelton production (particularly Carl Tom's set design) and Friel's play. Friel had, in his opinion, 'missed [the] larger design and produced a play that throughout is domestic in its pressures and concerns', concluding that the character who suffered most from the constraints of compression was Bazarov.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, paying particular attention to the play text, Cave noted Friel's stage direction (*FS* 66, referred to earlier) which indicates that '[Bazarov] is now a fully mature young man — neither in his clothes nor in his demeanour is there any trace of the student. His manner is brisk, efficient, almost icy.' Thus, Cave recognised that Friel's Bazarov has outgrown his nihilism, 'a passing grace-less affection', an observation that leads the critic to summarise: 'the stage-direction that pinpoints the weakness in Friel's conception of Bazarov also highlights what is the main strength of the play (one quite distinct from the novel).' When Cave comments that the play offers a sense of growth, he implicitly links this adaptation of Turgenev's novel to other plays by Friel. The real achievement of Friel's *Fathers and Sons*, for Cave, lies in the play's 'unsentimental portrayal of family-feeling to off-set Nazarov's [sic] questioning of the purpose and validity of all ties and relationships' and concludes that Bazarov's 'disruptive presence strengthens bonds and activates new developments of sympathy between the others.' In saying this, Cave implicitly acknowledges that Turgenev's vision of the family, as recaptured by Friel, is an enclave of potential civilisation and, in some respects, independent of the government. Cave basically

disallows Friel his right of manipulation, however, stating that the dramatist judges Bazarov in a way Turgenev did not.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, however, an understanding of the constraints facing Friel, is central to understanding his refashioning of Turgenev. In my opinion, Friel's play refers implicitly to the socio-political crisis besetting *his* communities — the confusions and complications inherent in explosively exclusive ideological stances and their violent manifestations. Moreover, Friel did not want his play to be construed by either English or any other audiences as a stereotypical Irish revolutionary paradigm of blood sacrifice. Consequently Turgenev's Bazarov is melted down in search of ubiquitous accommodation and communication — a way of life that nurtures all, not just some. This is surely ground common to both Turgenev and Friel. Turgenev's Bazarov's nihilism and the intellectual passion and candour that stirred Odintsova's carefully suppressed emotions are radically truncated in the play. As a consequence, Friel's Bazarov is, literally, an angry very young man. If, as Richard Allen Cave appreciated, this re-orientation of the novel is recognised, the alterations, particularly to Bazarov and Arkady and the women, make sense. The play does not explore the nihilist's revolution (hence the exclusion of Sitnikov and Kukshina whom Turgenev used to emphasise Bazarov's integrity). Indeed, in the play, Bazarov is undone by his own very human contradictions. This is signalled by his treatment of others and the fact that it is Arkady (and all that he represents) who heroicises Bazarov as a revolutionary, only later to set his 'former mentor and friend' aside. The reason for this is indicated at the end of Act One, Scene One, where Bazarov's nihilist tenets and his personal integrity are seen to be suspect (*FS* 17-21). From this point onwards, the apparently oblique remark by Nikolai, 'we all have our codes. We all have our masks' (*FS* 16), begins to work its way towards clarity, revealing that self-government and self-deception come in many guises. Hence Friel focuses upon how such codes and masks impact upon the self and others (particularly through Pavel, Fenichka and Odintsov) requiring his audiences to understand the inextricable link between matters personal and political, the necessity for a balance of heart and head. The pressure in Friel's play may, as Cave suggests, be domestic but the implication is much wider.

#### xv Friel's Pavel, Fenichka, Odintsov

Apart from alterations to the two students, three other characters refashioned by Friel have been somewhat overlooked by critics. Pavel, Fenichka and Odintsov grow in wisdom but not without cost. In the novel, the privileged Pavel and Odintsova represent Fenichka's social opposites. In the play, both their personal communications and social positions come

in to a much closer, more human sympathy, endorsing the possibilities of change, as in Pavel's support of his brother's marriage to Fenichka, and Odintsov's unselfish care of her young sister. And while Pavel's endorsement can be interpreted variously as a matter of decorum, of unselfish love, or of growing socio-political consciousness, some insight into Friel's construction of the *hauteur* is gleaned from the several conversations between Pavel and Fenichka (*FS* 4, 70, 82, 83, 93). In the opening scene Pavel *tutoyers* Fenichka but by the end of the play, they are genuinely at ease with one another, with Fenichka teasing Pavel, who gives her a ring which he once gave to a great love. The ring and its sphinx image are significant. Fenichka receives it with, 'I love it. I'll think of you every time I wear it', while Nikolai comments that 'It's a beautiful memento' (*FS* 93). Thus Friel reveals not only that Fenichka is now at ease with and has a genuine affection for Pavel, but also Nikolai's ignorance of the complexities involved (in a manner reminiscent of Arkady Islayev). When Fenichka does not join in the 'Drinking' song, there is the suggestion that although Nikolai and Fenichka will wed and will probably be very happy, there will always be a space between them, inhabited by Nikolai's dead wife. Changes will and do occur. Fenichka's relationship with Dunyasha, for example, is radically altered even though their final exchange captures something of the opening scene's intimacy. Nevertheless, throughout the last scene what Friel emphasises is that the past cannot be erased. Such experiences may well help inform the future but understanding and communication are seen to be as complex as ever.

Pavel's ability to communicate with both Fenichka and Odintsov is developed as openly as is possible under the circumstances, and extended by Friel in relation to Katya and Bazarov. Pavel is able to laugh at himself as seen through Katya's eyes, as a 'beau-de-Cologne', and his personal repression is reflected back at him through Bazarov's realisation that he loves Fenichka. In turn, Pavel is able to see and understand Odintsov's repression, her anguish and her self-betrayal in her rejection of Bazarov. Rejected once himself, Pavel appears to have spent much of his time in polite, emotional withdrawal and has only just come back into the world of human engagement. He offers to help save the hay (*FS* 66). Although well-intended, his proposal, like that of Manus in *Translations*, is impractical. He begins to talk openly to Odintsov and is now able, empathetically, to respect both Odintsov's fragility and the privacy she requires (*FS* 86-87). Gently intimating that he understands, even sympathises, he tells her, 'I wish I could help you, Anna', 'I very much wish I could help you' and then, with naked honesty, the man characterised as the 'tailor's dummy', admits, 'I have no answers to anything. We all want to believe at least in the possibility of one great love. And when we cannot achieve it — because it isn't achievable — we waste our lives



pursuing surrogates; at least those of us who are very foolish do' (*FS* 87). The use of 'achieve' and 'achievable' is stark and preceptorial. Friel has Fenichka cut across this remark, saying that it will 'soon be time to bring [the party] inside.' Here, subtly, the various comments reinforce the sense of the brevity of life. Pavel continues: 'And that's no life, no life at all [*He puts his hands on Anna's shoulders*] A kind of contentment is available, Anna: in routine, acceptance, duty' (*FS* 87) to which Odintsov replies, 'I had that life' (*FS* 87). Pavel's physical gesture expresses not only his compassion but a new, unfettered directness. 'It has its consolations. Is that a terrible thing to say?' he asks and when Odintsov responds: 'He thought so' (*FS* 87), the significance of this gapped exchange becomes powerfully potent. Anna's mask is off and we see the impact of Bazarov's death on her. These fragments re-examine the whole dynamics of the play: in the pursuit of communication and vital relationships, there are no easy paths, no absolutes. Then, in words reminiscent of Hugh at the close of *Translations*, and perhaps even speaking for Friel himself, Pavel admits to the limitations not so much of a life shaped by routine, acceptance and duty as of the human condition: 'it's the only threadbare wisdom I have for you. I don't believe a word of it myself' (*FS* 87). By this point, Pavel has grown in the audience's eyes. He has just revealed his feelings to Fenichka, albeit in verse: 'I sent thee late a rosy wreath, / Not so much honouring thee / As giving it a hope that there / It could not withered be' (*FS* 83). This metaphor is powerful. Any wreath will inevitably wither. But hope, albeit exhausting, is central to existence. Here, Friel both admits and celebrates our humanity. He does so in his own style but one that recalls the sad wisdom of Chekhov. Friel's Pavel, like his Olga, reminds us that around us and irrespective of us, life carries on.

The exchange between Pavel and Odintsov, like the final exchange between Pavel and Fenichka, is elliptical. They are remarkably telling fragments of writing, adept portraits of ambivalent relationships, perhaps miniatures of Turgenev's own life. In Friel's hands, the Bazarov-Odintsov and Pavel-Fenichka relationships encourage people to set aside the unattainable and find joy in the possible. This is, I believe, an insight Friel has substantially clarified dramaturgically, as a result of his Russian encounter. Both Turgenev and particularly Chekhov convey the mystery of life and emotions through ellipsis and through music, leaving the task of completing the circle of communication in the minds of audiences. Through ellipsis Friel also presses upon us the need for translation and constant re-reading of the gaps between words and meaning.

This is made particularly clear in the final exchange between Pavel and Bazarov. When Bazarov offers some advice, Pavel responds with '*Le malade n'est pas à plaindre qui a la*

*guerison en sa manche*' (FS 66).<sup>44</sup> In the past when Pavel has spoken in French, it has been evasive, either to cover his feelings for Fenichka or to gloss over his penchant for killing time harmlessly, reading Mrs. Radcliffe. Pavel knows Bazarov, on principle, will not speak French, and Friel has Bazarov say so — 'I don't speak French.' He does not say, 'I cannot speak French.' His meaning is absolutely clear. He *will not* speak French. This leaves the way open for Pavel to offer his own translation. Here Friel is at his most nimble. Whether we accept or suspect Pavel's translation is irrelevant. He invokes Montaigne and he chooses to interpret the essayist's words as meaning, 'don't pity the sick man' (FS 66). The words apply as much to Pavel as they do to Bazarov. More importantly, they can also be understood as an apology to Bazarov. Thus the *dvorianin*, albeit obliquely, admits to the *raznochinets* an error of judgement, and his own self-deception (over Fenichka). This is the sort of dialogue between apparent opposites that Friel treasures, and the subtlety of such exchanges is central to an appreciation of Friel's interventions. Yet critics see such interventions as coarse and sentimental. But in pursuit of his appeal for linguistic vigilance in communication and in relationships, Friel has been guarding against sentimentalising his source. This is well demonstrated in the idiom used throughout the play, Hiberno English and, particularly, in his development of the Pavel-Odintsov dialogue and the Pavel-Fenichka relationship, as well as in the wider context of the Kirsanov household. Moreover, Friel's handling of these personal relationships in no way diminishes the impact of Bazarov's outrage against what he perceives as a sick society. As indicated earlier, in Act Two, Scene Two Bazarov believes that the conditions in which humans live affect their physical and psychological well-being, and that as medical progress advances, help will be made available to all. He recognises that what is much more difficult to counteract is 'moral disease, moral imbalance', because their influence is insidiously present in institutions, 'our education system, religious superstition, heredity.' These, according to Bazarov, make up 'the polluted moral atmosphere ... [we] breathe.' At this point early in the play, Bazarov believes that it is possible to 'eradicate all disease' (FS 26) and in saying so, he surely functions as a naïf, calling for a 'remade society' where the words 'stupid and clever, good and bad' will somehow be re-valued (FS 26). Here, Friel recuperates Turgenev's metaphor of disease and adeptly uses it to criticise not only the naive but also the institutional and moral ambivalences in contemporary Ireland. At this point in the play we can see not only the inter-relatedness of the personal and political context, but pressures of the contemporary situation expressed through the domestic idiom.

However, Friel's Bazarov, for all his insight, fails personally because his plan of action amounts to wholesale destruction. Through his rewritten Bazarov Friel demonstrates that in

trying to avoid stereotypes, the pursuit of realistic characterisation may lead to a valorisation of individualism which raises more problems than it solves. This is why his individualistic, exclusivist Bazarov is diminished and characters like Arkady, Katya and Fenichka, individuals who are prepared to work towards accommodation and re-structuring, become Friel's social changers. It is not that they settle for the old system but rather, that through them, Friel shows that, irrespective of government, ordinary men and women need to structure their beliefs and lives, even if he personally perceives that such strategies often amount to self-deception and consoling fictions. And it is in this sense, of characters being and becoming, that all Friel's plays can be genuinely described as mediational narratives. They are plays of life, as it is, and as it could be. This is, no doubt, why Fintan O'Toole refers to Friel's theatre as 'a healing art', since Friel does not draw heroes but men and women with strengths and weaknesses, different representational forms, capable of redemptive struggle and revivifying change. It is, I believe, the absence of this appreciation of the larger context of Friel's drama, and particularly the *raison d'être* behind his Russian plays, that has escaped many of his critics.

Friel passes no judgement on his characters' self-knowledge or self-deception, and this includes Bazarov whom he reveals as confused and self-divided. He also uncovers varying degrees of personal breakdown behind the codes and masks of Turgenev's Kirsanovs and Anna Odintsova. In doing so he places before his audiences the unending task of communication and understanding, of how to become modern and yet retain contact with erstwhile traditional values. In *Fathers and Sons*, as in all his plays, there is the strong suggestion that there is a link between individual and social collapse. He examines this premise ostensibly from within a play about nineteenth Russia, a play preoccupied not with the laden contours of Irish history vis-à-vis England, but nonetheless relentless in its consideration of how we should live. In this sense Friel's play remains attentive to Turgenev's aims. But his interventions are provocative in so far as he rewrites aspects of the novel and its characters into a play the thesis of which, centring around growth and change and closely aligned with the concerns of his own dramas, is different in focus to the original. And while Friel himself declines to be 'preachy', his dramatic perspective is undoubtedly a moral one, free of cant and adamant in its search for meaningful change.

Turgenev saw that Russia needed 'new men' and 'new women.' So too, with characters such as his own Maire Chatach, and his re-fashioning of Turgenev's Fenichka, Arkady and Katya, does Friel present us with new characters, offered as examples of individuals capable of contributing to social change. Previously, such changes have been referred to by Friel as 'a

decolonisation of the imagination' and as self-location. Friel uses such phrasing to call attention to the necessity of defining one's own desires and capabilities in relation to others; a process in which self-knowledge and self-help are central.

In Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and *A Month in the Country*, familiar aspects of life and relationships are made enigmatic and challenging. Turgenev's language of calm surfaces masks problematic lower depths and dramatic skill directs the larger project: the realisation that self-knowledge is vital to individuals and nations if they are to live free and just lives. The same can be argued for Friel in so far as both writers focus upon the lives of ordinary people and the choices they make.

Whereas Friel's *Three Sisters* contests 'standard' English translations, his adaptation of *Fathers and Sons*, while less idiomatically accented, is, nevertheless, another play promoting self-location and self-reliance, with the refashioned Arkady, Katya and Fenichka as perhaps the most representative characters of this.

#### xvi conclusion

Both Turgenev's novel and Friel's play reflect the inextricable link between the personal and political. This connection, and the intensity with which it is scrutinised or defined in these works, are located in our response, affected in turn by our own context, and the myths and paradigms that shape our lives. Nevertheless, both the novel and the play show that the link between personal and political experience is also influenced by the recognition that the attainment of individual contentment, like the development of a strong family network, does not necessarily lead to general content and social improvement. For this reason, although Friel, like Turgenev, encourages change, neither offers an agenda.

In contemporary Ireland the possibility of national integration appears slight. This also appears to have been the case in Turgenev's and Chekhov's Russia. It is feasible to suggest that faced with the entrenched doxa of Irish discourse and surrounded with unrelenting violence, Friel was drawn to Turgenev's novel because though on one level it is a dream of national integration, on another it celebrates individual effort in the midst of irreconcilable class and cultural division in a vast country, handicapped by imperial paralysis. In this sense, the novel can be read as representing never-ending struggle, personal and socio-political. Moreover, if it is possible to deduce that Turgenev hoped that his novel would serve as some form of intervention in the corruptions and division endemic in Russian society, equally it is possible that Friel hoped his play would promote similar changes in Irish English relations. Living in a situation of extreme ideological and psychological bifurcation, Friel is well-

equipped to examine the various manifestations of a divided society, Russian or Irish, using theatre as a tool of social enquiry.

Turgenev's novel provided Friel with a literary framework through which he could, in the National English theatre, examine his own Irish socio-political reality much as Anouilh strategically altered Sophocles' *Antigone* so that its ancient enquiry and paradigm of ethical superiority could illuminate the predicament of modern occupied France. Anouilh's translation was performed in the 'court' of the enemy where fascist fact gave grim relevance to legend.<sup>45</sup> And just as Anouilh used myth to ask his audiences what correspondences they found between the issues explored in the play and their own circumstances, so Friel uses Turgenev's troubled Russia to enquire into the sources of conflict besetting contemporary Ireland – even though and perhaps because it was commissioned for English audiences.<sup>46</sup>

Friel's *Fathers and Sons*, like his other two rewritings, challenges the value of a dominant and fixed mode of translation, performance and production. Friel's alterations to the philosophies and characters of Turgenev and Chekhov make it clear that he believes in individual endeavour, that he is sceptical of political effort and that he assumes the value of competing voices.

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<sup>1</sup>. The *raznochintsy*, according to Victor Ripp, means 'the men between the ranks', people without any prospect of advancement, and consequently, no stake in retaining the existing form of government. However, as Dr. Gordon Spence points out, since *raznyi* means *different* or *various*, the term can be read as 'people of various ranks.' See Victor Ripp. *Turgenev's Russia, From Notes of a Hunter to Fathers and Sons*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 1980. 105n.

<sup>2</sup>. A term of Russian invention used to describe intellectuals of *all* persuasions, dedicated in one form or another to the improvement of life in Russia. The *intelligentsia* was not a homogenous class but a new social force in the life of the country. In 1866 the writer Boborykin defined the *intelligentsia* as "the highest cultural stratum of society, characterised by a democratic spirit and by a deep interest in the people, and by its defence of freedom of conscience against the absolutist state." Quoted by J. Meijer in *Knowledge and Revolution: The Russian Colony in Zurich (1870-73)* A contribution to the study of Russian Populism. Assen, Amsterdam: International Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, 1955. 226.

<sup>3</sup>. See Joe Andrew. *Russian Writers and Society in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century*. London: Macmillan, 1982. 1-41.

<sup>4</sup>. Ivan Turgenev. *Fathers and Sons*. Ed. and trans. Ralph E. Matlaw, A Norton Critical Edition. New York. London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1989. Subsequent references cited parenthetically with Chapter and page numbers, e.g. '(X 9)' whereas references to the play will give be cited as '*FS*' followed by page numbers, e.g. '*(FS 9)*.' N.B. Turgenev's Odinstova is referred to by Friel as 'Odinstov' and wherever applicable will be cited as such. See also Richard Freeborn. *Fathers and Sons*. Translation and edited by Richard Freeborn. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

<sup>5</sup>. For a comprehensive outline of social ranks in this period, including the landowning *dvorianin*, the *pomeshchik* (who owned a few serfs and a few acres), see Angus Calder. *Russia Discovered*,

*Nineteenth-century Fiction from Pushkin to Chekhov*. London: Heinemann, 1976. 60-72 (72). Also see endnote 12 below.

<sup>6</sup>. In the essay Turgenev analyses these characters as two opposing types: Don Quixote, whose enthusiasm is directed toward an ideal, is perceived as the very opposite of Hamlet. He does not calculate or weigh the consequences of his service and self-sacrifice. Whereas an active and wise heart dominates the life of Don Quixote, a head without insight and will is Hamlet's lot. I.S. Turgenev. "Hamlet and Don Quixote." *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii i pisem. Sochineniia* (Moscow & Leningrad, 1960-68) VIII 184. Also printed in *The Contemporary* London: 1860 and Petersburg: 1859.

<sup>7</sup>. See Eva Kagan-Kans, *Hamlet and Don Quixote: Turgenev's Ambivalent Vision*. The Hague: Mouton, 1975.

<sup>8</sup>. In the nineteenth century Russian society differed from the English, in which the class system delineated clearly between aristocracy and other classes. Mackenzie Wallace indicates that fixed social classes or 'castes' in the Oriental sense did not exist in Russia since 'between nobles, the clergy, the burghers, and the peasants there [were] no distinctions of race and no impassable barriers.' Consequently, peasants could become merchants, and peasants and sons of parish priests could become nobles. D. Mackenzie Wallace. *Russia*. London: Cassell, 1877 453. Chapter 18 offers the following statistics (from Kovalevsky), representing the various bodies at the end of the nineteenth century showing the relative size of the main social groups in Russia:

Peasants	81.5%
'Town- dwellers'	9%
Military estates	6.5%
Gentry	just over 1% [including hereditary and non- hereditary nobles]
Clergy	just over 1%

V.I. Kovalevsky. Ed. *Rossiiia v konstse XIX veka* [*Russia at the end of the nineteenth century*] St Petersburg, 1900. 67. See: Ronald Hingley. *Russian Writers and Society in the Nineteenth Century*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1977. 110. John Goodliffe points out that, 'by the end of the eighteenth century, the *dvorianstvo* (gentry) had become the "ruling" class (always bearing in mind that the real political power belonged to the Tsar and his government) and that, according to 1858 statistics in the Russian Empire there were about 1 million members of the *dvorianstvo* at that time out of a total population of some 68 million.' John Goodliffe. "Russian Society in the Nineteenth Century" 1996 lecture handout, Univ. Canterbury.

<sup>9</sup>. Avraham Yarmolinsky. *Turgenev: The Man, His Art and His Age*. New York: Orion Press, 1959 edn. 143, 208. E.R. Sands states that the term 'nihilist' was first used by the critic Nadezhdin in 1829 to indicate 'an ignorant, unprincipled man.' See: E.R. Sands' introduction to a stressed text of *Fathers and Sons*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1965. xii. According to Thomas McFarland, 'nihilism' was coined by Jacobi (a former post-Kantian philosopher). See: Thomas McFarland. *Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1995. 261. I am indebted to Dr. Gordon Spence, University of Canterbury for drawing my attention to this reference.

<sup>10</sup>. *Apropos of 'Fathers and Sons'* (1868-9) quoted in Matlaw 1989. 169-176 (172).

<sup>11</sup>. Letter 1206 dated 18th April 1862 to A.A. Fet (1820-92) a major lyric poet and 'a hardfisted, reactionary landowner' according to Matlaw. Letter cited in Matlaw 1989, 182 and in Knowles 1983. 103-104.

<sup>12</sup>. Emel'yan Pugachëv, Cossack leader of a vast insurrection (1773-4) against Catherine II and co-central character in Pushkin's historical novel *The Captain's Daughter* (1836).

<sup>13</sup>. Letter 1214, dated 26 April 1862, to K.K. Sluchevsky. Cited in Matlaw 1989. 184 and in Knowles 1983. 104-106 (106).

<sup>14</sup>. A quotation from A.S. Griboedov's 1823 comedy *Woe from Wit* (*Gore ot uma*) Act IV, sc iv.

<sup>15</sup>. Letter 1215, dated 28 April 1862, to A.I. Herzen (1812-70) self-exiled to the West and editor of the influential left-wing journal *The Bell* (*Kolokol*). According to Herzen, Bazarov has a cynicism of thought and feeling and a cynicism of manner and expression. Herzen maintained that Bazarov was determined to please his 'whims and personal calculations' and stated that 'If "Bazarovism" is a

disease, then it is the disease of our time, and must be endured to the end no matter what palliatives and amputations are employed.' Cited in Matlaw 1989. 186-7.

<sup>16</sup>. Sands. "Introduction" 1965. x.

<sup>17</sup>. Cited in Angus Calder *Russia Discovered, Nineteenth-century Fiction from Pushkin to Chekhov*. London: Heinemann, 1976. 98.

<sup>18</sup>. Regarding Chernyshevsky's dissertation (1855) which argued that social, utilitarian considerations should take precedence over aesthetics, see Andrew 1982. 9. See also Matlaw page 33 endnote 7.

<sup>19</sup>. He explains that his representatives had to be good 'in order to prove my theme the more surely: if the cream is bad, what will the milk be like?' He continues: 'all the real *negators* I have known, without exception (Belinsky, Bakunin, Herzen, Dobrolyubov, Speshnev, etc.), came [like Bazarov] from comparatively good and honest parents', such as the devoted Bazarovs. The Bazarovs' characterisation was highly praised by Herzen and Dostoevsky, and Turgenev argues that coming from such good parental stock 'removes from the *men of action*, the negators, every suspicion of *personal* dissatisfaction, personal irritation. They go their way only because they are more sensitive to the demands of national life.'

<sup>20</sup>. Letter to M.E. Saltykov, 3 Jan. 1876 cited in Matlaw 1989. 190. Letter to K.K. Sluchevsky, 14 April 1862 cited in Matlaw 1989. 184. Also letter from Herzen to Turgenev, 9 April 1862 cited in Matlaw 1989. 186.

<sup>21</sup>. Letters to Ludwig Pietsch, 22 January, 1869 and 22 May 1869 cited in Matlaw 1989. 187-88.

<sup>22</sup>. Letter to P.V. Annenkov, 20 December 1869 cited in Matlaw 1989 188; letter to I.P. Borisov, 24 December 1869 cited in Matlaw 1989. 189.

<sup>23</sup>. Brian Friel. "Introductory Essay." *A Month in the Country, after Turgenev*. Dublin: Gallery Books 1992, 9.

<sup>24</sup>. Whatever Turgenev's own intentions may have been, Moser suggests that his writing was largely responsible for inaugurating a trend of anti-nihilist novels in the 1860s. Charles Moser. *Ivan Turgenev*. New York; London: Colombia UP, 1972. 64.

<sup>25</sup>. Interview. Friel-C.Fusco. Greencastle, Donegal 16 Aug. 1996.

<sup>26</sup>. Chapter XIX in the novel, and Act II in the play.

<sup>27</sup>. See Vitalii Shulgin, *O sostoianii*, iii-v, cited in Richard Stites. *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia, Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism 1860-1930*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1978. 16. and Barbara Heldt. *Terrible Perfection*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987, particularly Part I, "The Fictions of Russian Men." 12-63.

<sup>28</sup>. The etymology is based on *besedovat'* - to converse and take tea *en plein air*.

<sup>29</sup>. Richard Freeborn. *The Novelist's Novelist*. London: 1960. 75, 115.

<sup>30</sup>. F.F. Seeley. *Turgenev: A reading of his Fiction*. New York; Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.

<sup>31</sup>. In 1880, Turgenev wrote:

I have aspired to the extent that my powers and ability have permitted, conscientiously and impartially to depict and embody in suitable types both what Shakespeare calls: 'the body and pressure of time' and that rapidly changing physiognomy of Russians of the cultured stratum, which has been pre-eminently the object of my observations.

Cited in Stites New Jersey 1978. See also "Turgenev: The Politics of Hesitation." Irving Howe. Cited in Matlaw 1989. 291-294.

<sup>32</sup>. R. Freeborn letter to author 15 May 1993.

<sup>33</sup>. Frank O'Connor. *The Lonely Voice*. London: Macmillan, 1963. 43. Turgenev himself rejected any tendentiousness for his work declaring that he had never written for the people but only for his own class: 'I never occupied myself, and will never occupy myself, with politics. It is foreign and uninteresting to me ... I have never written for the people. I have written for that class of society to which I belong - beginning with *A Sportsman's Sketches* and ending with *Fathers and Sons*' (5, 120).

<sup>34</sup>. F.F. Seeley letter to author 11 June 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Aware of Turgenev's original, the critic Michael Coveney comments that Arkady's nihilism is 'temporary' and that the 'gangling, sunny Arkady ... is transformed into a raging comic poltroon noisily echoing Bazarov's revolutionary ardour' and concludes that this 'is a beautifully measured dramatic adjustment' by Friel.

<sup>36</sup>. Pavel remarks that these are the two novels he is missing. But in Act One he told Odintsov he was reading *The Romance in the Forest*. If this is a case of good manners preventing him from saying he already has the novel here, then Friel is signalling the continuance of polite society and repressions.

<sup>37</sup>. In a letter to K.K. Sluchevsky dated 26 April, 1862, Turgenev describes Odintsova as another representative 'of our idle, dreaming, curious and cold epicurean young ladies, our female nobility [one who] would like to stroke the wolf's fur [Bazarov's] so long as he doesn't bite, then stroke the little boy's curls - and continue to recline, all clean, on velvet.' Matlaw 1989 185. Knowles translates Turgenev's description of Odintsova as: 'a representative of those lazy, dreamy, curious, cold and epicurean ladies of our gentry class, our female landowners.' Knowles. 1983. 104-106 (105).

<sup>38</sup>. Robert Cushman. "Father and Sons." *Plays and Players* Sep. (1987): 20-21.

<sup>39</sup>. Michael Coveney. *Financial Times* 10 Jul. 1987.

<sup>40</sup>. Cushman. *Plays and Players* Sep. (1987): 20.

<sup>41</sup>. Jeremy Kingston. "Fathers and Sons." *The Times* 10 Jul. 1987.

<sup>42</sup>. Julian Graffy, "Remaking Russia." *Theatre Ireland* 13. (1987): 12.

<sup>43</sup>. Richard Allen Cave. "Fathers and Sons." *Theatre Ireland* 13 (1987): 48-49.

<sup>44</sup>. Roughly translates as, 'the sick person can't complain who has his healer up his sleeve.'

<sup>45</sup>. George Steiner. *Antigones*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984. 5.

<sup>46</sup>. In this regard, see George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*. London: Faber and Faber, 1961. 330.



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### Chapter summary

In Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, language and behaviour reflect intimate, subtle psychological patterns and social portraiture. Friel re-reads Turgenev's portrayal of personal and social disintegration, and particularly repressed emotions, examining the roles and relationships within marriages, family and education. Through specific alterations to the characters of Shpigelsky, Belyayev, Vera and Natalya, Friel focuses upon the tension between personal communications and upon choices between desire and conduct.

In a manner similar to his treatment of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, and working from a literal translation by Christopher Heaney, Friel once again adds Irish idiolects and uses localisation both to displace existing English interpretations of *A Month in the Country* and to re-interpret Turgenev afresh.<sup>1</sup>

Through specific physical and verbal alterations (some of which echo alterations in his *Three Sisters* and *Fathers and Sons*) Friel emphasises particular characters' inner conflicts so that his drama amplifies Turgenev's subtle psychological fabric. He does not, for example, re-instate certain excisions made by Turgenev, and by the censors (because considered subversive) but instead compresses the text in places, effectively externalising specific characters' psychological conflicts so that the consequent changes emphasise and show mood swings and repressions. Accordingly, this chapter identifies Friel's alterations, considers critical response to these and examines how such changes affect Turgenev's play and how the resulting rewriting relates to Friel's enterprise of decolonisation.

### i in the age of realism

Turgenev wrote *A Month in the Country* in Paris between 1848 and 1850, revolutionary years when the influence of his friends, Belinsky and Herzen, was paramount and at a time when he began his *Sportsman's Sketches* (1847-50).<sup>2</sup>

Frederick Friedeberg Seeley claims that 'Turgenev's last and best play, *A Month in the Country*, marks, a generation before Chekhov, the full development of the psychological drama.' Like Isaiah Berlin and Leonid Grossman<sup>3</sup>, Seeley identifies a debt to Honoré de Balzac's *La Marâtre* (1848), which has been acclaimed by some as the beginning of the 'theatre of Realism.'<sup>4</sup> Turgenev was in Paris at the time and may well have seen Balzac's play, revolving around a stepmother and a stepdaughter as rivals for the love of a young man. The older woman schemes to find out the girl's affections and the nature of the man's feelings. Intent upon securing the man's affections, the protagonist attempts to dispose of her

rival by marrying her off to a preposterous suitor. Besides the basic situation and plot, the two plays share, in some measure, three of the secondary roles, those of the vain, clumsy suitor, the observant and meddlesome doctor and the young son of the protagonist, and also some of the 'business' including the group of card-players, with their exchanges counterpointing more serious dialogue, and the protagonist on her knees before her young rival. However, *La Marâtre* has no analogue to the character and role of Rakitin and whereas Balzac's world is romantic, Turgenev's is a psychologically complex one peopled with characters caught in the gaps in their own self-knowledge and conflicting passions.

In the age of realism, drama lagged behind the novel. Flaubert completed *Madame Bovary* in 1857, but it was one thing to read about the turbulent passions of Emma Bovary in private, and quite another to *see* a play about the adulterous passions of Natalya Petrovna in company at the theatre. And although not performed until January 1872, *A Month in the Country* was as strikingly *not* of its time as, for example, the work of Büchner.<sup>5</sup> The character of Natalya Petrovna is a diagnosis of human conduct ill-harnessed to a marriage, family and friends and undermined by repression and personal discontent. Privileged like Emma Bovary, Natalya is similarly unaware of the sources of her self-division, and because she is not in trusting touch with them, her actions turn with tragic consequences into a clash between personal emotions and conscience over the welfare of others. Throughout Turgenev's play the fatal nature of human subjectivity as it rebounds upon others is continually emphasised, an aspect that particularly attracted Friel.

## ii censors and critics

Initially entitled *The Student* and then *Two Sisters*, Turgenev's play underwent considerable excision in the hands of the Russian censor.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence (and unlike *Fathers and Sons* after it) *A Month in the Country* raised little controversy when it was published in *The Contemporary* in 1855. When first produced in Moscow in 1872, it appears equally to have made little impression. This remained the case until the St. Petersburg production of 1879, featuring Maria Gavrilovna Savina who, playing the part of Vera, captivated Turgenev. The play reached a new level of recognition after the (now) famous unabridged 1909 Moscow Arts Theatre production by Stanislavsky and Moskvina with Olga Knipper (Chekhov's widow) portraying the turbulent Natalya Petrovna.

In the twentieth century, it has become a commonplace of criticism to suggest that Turgenev's purpose in *A Month in the Country* was to show the frailty and absurdity of romantic love. Contemporary English critics and productions have supported this

interpretive line whilst Soviet critics and directors maintained that *A Month in the Country* was the forerunner to Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and insisted that a romantic reading ignored the play's social and political dimensions and reduced it to a drama of emotional intoxication and arrested action.<sup>7</sup> Such critics draw attention to the scathing social criticisms embedded in Shpigelsky's speeches about his childhood and especially his blunt address to Lizaveta Bogdanovna early in Act Four. They also emphasise the significance of the student, Belyayev, his impoverished upbringing and Natalya's treatment of him. Belyayev, with justification, is seen as an early sketch for Bazarov and, like his successor, he is a forerunner of the 'new men' depicted in Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* Read as such, Belyayev can be interpreted as initiating an exemplary opposition to the privileged decadent, the declining gentry, as represented by Natalya Petrovna and her *beau monde*. With the original censorship cuts, the political dimension of Belyayev, like that of Shpigelsky, was diluted. He was originally described as a student belonging to the 'department of political studies' and whilst Turgenev removed 'department of political studies' and the censor removed 'university', Belyayev retained the definite outline of the author's life-long friend and critic, Vissarion Belinsky.<sup>8</sup>

In the preface to his 1981 translation of the play, Isaiah Berlin suggests that although the socio-political line of interpretation has been driven too far, there is, nevertheless, a great deal of truth in it, noting that the censored passages are evidence of the direction of Turgenev's social analysis in the play and that Shpigelsky's criticisms, in particular, form a formidable arraignment of the Establishment.<sup>9</sup> Based on experience, his observations are incisive and justified and they would not have gone unnoticed by a contemporary reader or audience. Censorship in this period, and particularly between 1848 and 1856, was very conservative and cautious. Hence any hint of criticism of the political status quo was excised. Clearly, an awareness of the imperious nature of Russian censorship (evident from the censored passages) problematises a reading of *A Month in the Country* simply as a romantic comedy in five acts. In the preface to his 1991 translation Richard Freeborn emphasises the narrowness of such an approach.<sup>10</sup> Overall the play's social dynamics proleptically illustrate the contrast between the two formative generations of the nineteenth century Russian *intelligentsia*, the men of the forties and of the sixties. Critics generally agree that the play, together with *Fathers and Sons* and *The Sketches*, marks a shift away from Romanticism, associated with the homogenising of Western literary values, towards a fully developed psychological-social enquiry and, undoubtedly, this is an aspect that appealed to Friel. Isaiah Berlin construes Turgenev's play as an arraignment of nineteenth

century Russian gentry and imperialism, and similarly, Friel's reworking of *A Month in the Country* can, in some respects, be interpreted as asking Irish audiences to re-read the influences shaping individual and socio-political values. To say that is not to imply that Friel's version of *A Month in the Country* (using Turgenev's play as a critique of Irish Big House society and its institutions) is Marxist. He did not after all re-instate the cuts regarding Belyayev. His version, akin to his adaptation of *Fathers and Sons*, is a highly reductive variant of Turgenev's work with an intelligence and argumentative poise of its own, making it artificial to evaluate it as either an ideological or an orthodox translation. More relevant, and the thrust of this chapter, is to be alert to Friel's alterations to the play and its characters and to discover if and how such alterations contribute to his critique of the influence of the English discourse in Ireland, the consequences of its role in cultural formation and his challenge to these.

One critic, Tim Harding, for example, quickly identifies Friel's idiomatic pointing as 'a curious hybrid' between the eloquence of Sheridan and contemporary Kerry dramatist, John B. Keane and described Joe Dowling's production at the Gate in terms redolent of Oscar Wilde, 'stylish, sophisticated and very funny.'<sup>11</sup> Harding praised Friel's Shpigelsky and overall described Friel's text as 'vigorous' and 'totally modern' but he did not consider the interrogative connection between Friel's use of localisation of idiom and place which were used to bring the working technique and stylistic specifics to the forefront where audiences can observe them. Unlike Ian Hill, Harding did not examine the issue of hybridisation in relation to communicative efficiency. Ian Hill praised both the production and the text as 'more suited to Irish actors and to Irish ears than any previous English language translation.'<sup>12</sup> Hill recognised Friel's alterations, especially the destabilising effects developed by Friel which range from the pronounced idiom and mood swings of Natalya, to some specific subtle amplifications to the characters of Bolshintsov and Vera. Overall, Friel mixes patterns of speech and conduct, creating an exuberant indeterminacy, in a manner similar to Joyce in his portraits of Dubliners where malapropisms, puns and Dublinese slang are mixed with and destabilise Castle English.<sup>13</sup> For example, Natalya's ambivalence is frequently revealed in verbal tones which (like those of his Natasha Prozorov) swing between the refined and vulgar. In a similar manner he uses the malapropisms of Schaaf not simply to show that character's inadequate grasp of the language of his employers but, more importantly, to comment up the repressions and gaps in the Islayevs' communications.

Friel's unapologetic use of the Irish idiom, itself a product of hybridisation, and his specific character alterations, indicate, among other things, the enormity of the task of representing those who have been dominated, interpreted and mediated by others for so long through English discursive practices. Indeed he has had to create a language for a class

which never existed in Ireland — a nineteenth century estate-owning native society — an absence which in itself raises questions regarding equity and justice in Ireland's past.

This is not to argue that Christopher Heaney's translation and Friel's re-working of it guarantee a clearer understanding of Turgenev's intention than existing translations. Again, as with his *Fathers and Sons*, Friel's version of *A Month in the Country* functions as an interrogative re-writing similar to Anouilh's 1944 *Antigone*. Specifically, it is a re-reading of wills in conflict aimed at challenging notions of authority and interrogating our understanding of ourselves and others and the consequences of unresolved conflict.

To focus attention on these issues, Friel alters Turgenev's Shpigelsky, Belyayev and Vera in particular, using them, like his own outsiders, to reveal the myths of identity (as unified) and belonging (as natural), and to interrogate the authority of 'the centre' (exercised through ideological state apparatus) with its appeal for linguistic and political unity. According to Althusser, these apparatuses, (working through the family, the churches and cultural-socio-political relations) operate in and mould civil society (q.v.) through the process of interpellation (q.v.).<sup>14</sup>

### iii a theatre of moods

Friel states that Turgenev's 'vacillation, [his] inability to act decisively, the longing to be other, to be elsewhere, became the very core of his dramatic action.' Turgenev, according to Friel, 'fashioned a new kind of dramatic situation and a new kind of dramatic character where for the first time psychological and poetic elements create a theatre of moods and where the action resides in internal emotion and secret turmoil and not in external events.'<sup>15</sup> 'Turgenev,' he adds, 'never had a total grasp on things but there is tremendous honesty in his half-jesting admission that life, so incredibly short, is a mystery and that "reality", as we claim to know it, is simply a convention, a buffer against our own incompleteness.' In Friel's opinion, 'Turgenev's characters are like ourselves, the frequent associates of uncertainty and loneliness. Natalya Petrovna is a classic example. But her actions are the sad and savage workings of subjective judgement. The subjective world is anti-heroic and misunderstandings multiply even as people talk. The ramifications of this are far-reaching.'<sup>16</sup>

### iv on a note of local difference

Friel's version of *A Month in the Country* begins on a note of difference when someone plays a John Field nocturne off-stage. Like the off-stage playing of a Chekhovian guitar, Field's music reminds us of an *Irish* harmony uninterrupted by words. On stage, the trio of

Anna Semyonovna Islayeva, Lizaveta Bogdanovna and Adam Ivanovich Schaaf play *Préférence* up stage left.<sup>17</sup> Down stage left, Natalya Islayev paints, while Mikhail Rakitin, standing close by, stares into the middle distance and intermittently reads to her from Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (a work which, according to Victor Shklovsky, portrays a world of characters trapped in private allusions).<sup>18</sup> The introduction of Field's music and Sterne's novel, and Friel's expansion of Turgenev's Schaaf's opening word ('Hearts') and malapropisms, are deliberate acts of localisation and, therefore, of re-territorialisation but also of indeterminacy. By changing Turgenev's 'Hearts' into 'Hartz are trumpery' (*MC* 17),<sup>19</sup> Friel makes comic capital out of Schaaf's inadequate use of language but, more importantly, indicates explicitly that not only words but feelings can deceive. The phrase 'Hartz are trumpery' is a telling malapropism, connoting both Schaaf's lecherous character and the play's swirls of intrigue and repression. Like Natalya's repeated use of the world 'game' with reference to Belyayev, the object of her desire (*MC* 21, 22, 23, 81, 82), Schaaf's repeated malapropism is a parody of the emotional and psychological games afoot. Thus, from the opening line Friel intervenes and destabilises, signalling that between words and meaning (between what is said, what is meant and how it is heard) lies a complex of subjective difference.

#### v patterns of thoughts, words and deeds

As the play unfolds, interjections such as Schaaf's and repetitions of words such as 'game', 'mess', 'confusion', 'astonishing' and 'swing', together with fragments of music, become charged, creating a subtext of patterns which combine to reveal the disjunction among characters' words, actions and their motives. These are similar to the echoes or patterning noted earlier in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and extended by Friel, as for example Tusenbach's catch-phrase or the private dialogues between Masha and Vershinin. Similar patterning is apparent in *Fathers and Sons*, as well as in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, two other plays in which, like *A Month in the Country*, a family is 'invaded' by an outsider and brought close to the brink of collapse. All five plays demonstrate the instability of meaning, the impossibility of closure and the woeful consequences of self-division.

With Schaaf's malapropism temporarily 'corrected', the game of *Préférence* continues with its own ironic resonance. Friel locates his family by having Anna focus attention on the Field piece being played, we are told, by Vera, Natalya's ward, in the adjoining room. Audience attention is focussed on the music when Anna says she met the musician in Moscow, 'a very handsome man with that angular Irish face' (*MC* 18). From this point

onward, Field's music is used in association with Vera: at the beginning of Act One, Scene One, at the beginning and end of Act One, Scene Three and again at the end of Act Two, Scene Two. But whereas initially audiences may perceive Vera's playing as a form of self-expression, subsequently, when it stops, it indicates Natalya's control over her ward's life. In a similar manner, at the beginning of Act One, Scene Two, Kolya is confined inside the house, playing five-finger exercises, in contrast to Katya who is free to sing her love song, outside in the garden. Like Chekhov, Friel uses specific and often local pieces of music to comment upon or amplify the experiences of characters. This same form of expressive extension is also present in repeated words and phrases in the dialogue sometimes augmented by music to create non-linguistic signals of repression.<sup>20</sup> When, for example, Natalya and Rakitin discuss the new but problematic sluice gate of her 'energetic husband - the dam enthusiast', Arkady (MC 19), Natalya's barely submerged negativity renders the word 'dam' equivocal as her general air of unease surfaces and she claims that enthusiasm is 'a vice', then 'a virtue' and again asserts that it is 'a vice' (MC 19). This moment of unprovoked fractiousness is the first in a series of pendulum-like mood swings. Subsequently, in answer to Anna's enquiry as to Kolya's whereabouts, Natalya says that her son is out in the garden with his new tutor, and Schaaf again pipes up 'Once again hartz' (MC 20). When abruptly repeated, 'Hartz are trumpery once more' (MC 20), his malapropism now serves to suggest a possible source of Natalya's irritation. In effect, the play's first sequence of psychological and social patterning, of 'garden, tutor, and hearts', has been adumbrated to form part of a symbolic geography.

## vi symbolic geography

Well established in nineteenth century Russian literature and employed in Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and in Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, this geography suggests that, symbolically, the house of the gentry represents the civilising forces of culture and the garden, although cultivated, represents a freer domain. Neither area is without difficulties. In *A Month in the Country* and *Fathers and Sons*, Turgenev reveals that ambivalence lurks behind the civilising façades of the house, but that the landscape or gardens, associated with things natural, wild and spontaneous, can also be ferocious.

In Turgenev's play the Islayev garden is an area for exchanging confidences, as between Vera and Belyayev, and truth-telling, as in Rakitin's soliloquy or Katya's love song. In this garden Belyayev and Kolya climb trees and play, Katya gathers raspberries, observes the antics of her 'superiors' and is pursued by Schaaf. But while the Islayev garden and



meadows may offer moments of escape from the civilising pressures of the house, they are not necessarily safe or free. The Islayev garden is, like the garden of Anna Odintsova and the arbour on the Kirsanov estate, full of growth, and attracts innocence *and* enquiry. More than anything Turgenev uses nature and the garden to show that growth entails an openness to change.

In contrast to the garden, the Islayev house holds its secrets, hosting incompatible people in various stages of recognition or repression of the balancing of heart and head. It is not so much that this household is a nest of 'superfluous' individuals. Rather, these privileged people hide their psychological tensions and passions beneath the social and cultural conventions or release them in monologues which reveal them to be emotionally illiterate, confused and highly unpredictable. And because these characters do not pursue a balance between heart and head, they are seen to be unstable, incapable of sustaining themselves or others. Consequently, their motives and decisions grow ambivalent with profound repercussions.

Friel retains Turgenev's symbolic geography, condensing it into patterns of garden, house repression and growth, overcast by threatening 'clouds', well before the end of Act One, Scene One (*MC* 17-35). As in Turgenev, following up Anna's enquiry about Kolya, Rakitin enquires about the boy's new tutor. Natalya's response is curt and instructive. Belyayev, she explains, is twenty-one, with insufficient grace to suit Rakitin, but she likes him 'because he is so unlike us; he is so ... unjaded' (*MC* 20). In saying this, she reveals her awareness of, even anxiety, over the passage of time and her own domestic stasis. This anxiety clearly colours a fierce response to Rakitin's comment regarding his friends, recently wed, being bored with each other. Ironically Natalya casts Rakitin and her companions as 'lace-makers' in 'gloomy, airless rooms' playing private word games from which she wants to escape. When Rakitin asks if 'love and boredom aren't perfectly compatible' (*MC* 21), once again Natalya responds sharply, almost accusingly. Her restiveness is amplified by the action of the card game and her anxiety is apparently further compounded by Belyayev, offstage, engaged in a game of 'hide-and-seek' with Kolya in the garden. This game, and Belyayev's erratic counting, comment upon Natalya's mood and repressed frustrations. Turgenev's dramatic surface, like that of Chekhov, is full of such off-stage dynamics which, together with non-sequiturs, gaps and pauses on stage, underline the flux of life and characters' emotions.

Within the opening three pages of *his* version Friel recreates the current of Turgenev's characters' thoughts and emotions but, in performance, the compressed rhythms of speech

and gestures are sharper than those of Berlin's translation. This is particularly apparent in Friel's localisation of Dr. Shpigelsky and his first exchange with Natalya who summons him to 'cure us all; give us a good laugh' (MC 24). With the exception of Lizaveta, Shpigelsky's banal and local jokes fail to amuse anyone. Undeterred, Shpigelsky approaches Natalya regarding Vera and proceeds with his business of match-making not so much because of his elderly friend, Bolshintsov, but more for the reward with which he has been bribed (MC 26). This private colloquy is broken when Vera bursts in from the garden and is chided by her guardian. Friel's stage directions indicate that Vera's is 'an entrance like Aleksey's, her face is flushed and animated' (MC 27). Her tone, like her antics and appearance, is infectiously child-like, a fact which Natalya draws to Shpigelsky's attention. As a result of Friel's alterations, it is possible to draw both contrasts and parallels between his Odintsov and her young sister Katya in *Fathers and Sons*, and Natalya and her ward Vera. Adding a physicality to Vera and Katya (as well as Dunyasha) he brings them more into line with rural Irish types rather than young Russian ladies. Consequently it is as though Vera's youth and innocence pull Natalya back into trusting touch with herself so that she admits, almost by way of apology to Rakitin, that she has been 'so restless, so irritable all day' but that she is 'fine now' (MC 28). However, this apology, like Natalya's subsequent affirmations of affection, pales with repetition and is undercut by outbursts of abuse (MC 57).

### vii critical response

The interior divisions of these people have been established by the end of Friel's first scene which condenses Turgenev's first act. Kay Hingerty found that these alterations made Friel's version more rugged and less genteel but 'vital' and 'accessible'<sup>21</sup> whereas Mary Carr found the language to be 'fluid and familiar.'<sup>22</sup> Both critics detected what they described as an increased level of physical energy in both the language and performance. Their response echoes Michael Coveney's observations on Friel's re-drawing of Katya and Dunyasha in *Fathers and Sons* and Nuala Hayes' comments regarding Friel's localisations in *Three Sisters*, effectively bringing characters into line with rural Irish types, rather than young Russian ladies. And although not uniform across the translations, such alterations, particularly localisations, aim for communicative efficiency.

Desmond Rushe commented that 'Mr. Friel's end product comes close to the description of the original as a comedy – much closer than the last production I remember, which was a version by Emlyn Williams'. Although Rushe suggested that 'perhaps' the comic element had been 'allowed to be too dominant' and that this would be remembered 'more vividly than

the emotional complexities,' nevertheless, he concluded by saying that the performances ranged 'from the good to the superlative in a production of impeccable style and exceptional quality.'<sup>23</sup> (A similar ambiguity occurred in his review of Field Day's production of Friel's *Three Sisters* where he detected localisations and hybridisation but did not question or examine either in depth). Unlike Rushe, David Nowlan felt Joe Dowling had struck a balance between the comic and other elements, and stated that

ostensibly [*A Month in the Country*] is about Natalya ... [her] attraction to other men ... her dependence on her lapdog Michel, ... her infatuation with the young tutor ... more deeply the play is about the avoidance of the consequences of love. Ultimately, and most darkly, it is about the consequences of that avoidance as Vera's promise as both a lively young girl and a talented musician is subsumed into what may turn out to be a marriage of disastrous convenience.<sup>24</sup>

Both Rushe and Nowlan commented on the elegance of the set design, describing Eileen Diss' set as 'glowing' and 'dazzling', Dany Everett's costumes as 'perfect' and Mick Hughes' lighting as 'excellent'. Noleen Dowling suggested that Friel's physical and verbal alterations to Christopher Heaney's literal translation added 'a great deal of very broad humour, and a depth of emotionally-expressive language which heightens, defines, and elaborates the original in a very impressive way.'<sup>25</sup> Conversely, Emer O'Kelly felt that Friel's localisation 'level[led] out so many of the subtle layers of the original [so that] sadly much is lost by Friel's reduction of the classes to drawing room and kitchen. ... Russian country society may have been cruel, crude and unsophisticated; but it was still largely (and mercifully) free of the vulgar refinement of the petite bourgeoisie.'<sup>26</sup> O'Kelly did not perceive Friel's localisations (drawn in a similar manner in Joyce's *Portrait* or *The Dead*) functioning as a critique of Irish petite bourgeoisie. Different again, Patsy McGarry enthused that Friel's text and the Gate production delivered 'a simply wonderful play ... hardly comedy and hardly tragedy ... a tone piece' but questioned neither Friel's localisations nor their implications and concluded enigmatically, 'Mr. Friel favours the Russians'<sup>27</sup> By contrast, Friel's localisations were a point of focus for Seamus Deane who considers that 'Friel's translations contribute to the current climate of critical re-reading' and suggested that, 'Friel's Russian plays, as items exploring hybridisation, register an unevenness of incorporation within a developmental structure rather than as oscillation between or among identities. They are critically and aesthetically independent.'<sup>28</sup> Like Deane but in contrast to many other local responses, the English critic Ian Hill identified specific linguistic tensions and omissions as productive and stressed that Friel's localisations, particularly his use of Irish idiomatic rhythms, were 'suited to Irish actors and to Irish ears.' Hill, possibly influenced by

Thomas Kilroy's *Seagull* (at the National Theatre, London), proposed that 'Friel's success in presenting the once-peasant doctor's resentment of Big House society in a thoroughly Irish argot and context suggests that the master [Friel] should have gone further and transferred the Islayev estate, lock stock and samovar, to his beloved Donegal.'<sup>29</sup>

### viii omissions

Whereas Friel's adaptation of *Fathers and Sons* from 'page to stage' necessitated quite major omissions, relatively few occur in his re-working of Christopher Heaney's literal translation of *A Month in the Country*. In Friel's Act One (which condenses Turgenev's Acts One to Three), three relatively minor omissions serve to bring emotional frustrations abruptly to the surface.<sup>30</sup> In the first, Friel deletes Natalya's open declaration to Rakitin that she wants *him* to want her. Instead, Friel has his Natalya, like a petulant child, repeat the phrase, 'I want' three times, and then, 'controlling herself and flashing a smile', falsely declare: 'I want you to read to me ... please ...' (MC 19). That small omission, replaced by a ripple of repetitions, gives a particularly impetuous cast to Natalya's words and indicates that communication between the two is not totally open or rational. Indeed, Natalya's affection for Rakitin, like her attention span, is seen to be fickle. Moreover, Friel's second alteration, the early entrance of Belyayev, points to the possible reason.

In Turgenev's text it is the child, Kolya, who first bursts into the room like Eros, displaying the bow and arrow which Belyayev, who hesitates in the doorway, has made for him. Friel omits this entrance of Kolya and instead introduces the tutor, casting him like another Yolland, an innocent abroad, apologising profusely for his intrusion. Friel signals a pattern of growth and self-knowledge by having Anna Islayeva comment, 'himself and Kolya together — you would scarcely know which was the pupil' (MC 23). Natalya endorses and extends this. Using her lace-making metaphor, she says 'people like Master Belyayev, are altogether different from us. We know nothing about them - we're so busy with our little stitches. Trouble is, for all our — [She mimes lace-making] — we know very little about ourselves either' (MC 23). This lack of self-knowledge is echoed in a joke Friel gives Shpigelsky.

Friel omits Shpigelsky's long and very Russian tale of an unresolved love triangle concerning Verenitsyn, Perikuyov and Protobekasov and instead has his doctor joke about people forgetting themselves. When Shpigelsky's joke fails to amuse, he comments on the 'chilly' atmosphere. Both his joke and observation regarding the atmosphere in the Islayev household, serve to amplify Natalya's discontent and 'displeasure' (MC 26)..

Each of the three omissions is adjacent to moments of pronounced mood swing by Natalya and serve to emphasise either repressed emotions or outbursts. For example, her needling of Rakitin (*MS* 19, 20, 67) and her eventual description of Belyayev as a 'jumped-up, baby-faced pup' and 'bastard' (*MS* 102). In general, such idiomatic localisations make Friel's version less poetic than Berlin's translation. But because it is more abrupt and obvious in tone, Friel's version is reminiscent of the repressions and sudden emotional eruptions that characterise *Dancing at Lughnasa*, written in the previous year. Consequently both of these plays convey a similar sense of an impending storm.

In *A Month in the Country* this is emphasised by Friel's re-plotting of three specific conversations, revealing characters' varying levels of self-confrontation. Through relatively minor alterations these conversations (one expanded and two condensed) become, in close proximity, tragi-comic and ironic. The first is between Natalya and Rakitin (*MC* 28-29), the second between Islayev and Rakitin (*MC* 30-31), and the third between Natalya and Belyayev (*MC* 31-33). Individually, these exchanges illustrate unsatisfactory and incomplete communications. But combined, they draw attention to the dominant influence of Natalya in relation to Rakitin, Islayev and Belyayev. In relatively quick succession the three men reveal their sense of awe and confusion in relation to Natalya. To each, she is an 'astonishing' force to which they feel compelled to react.

In the first exchange (expanded to express excessive refinement but also repression), Rakitin confesses to Natalya that she is his only 'little shred of happiness', one he clings to but fears it is slipping away (*MC* 29). Ironically, Rakitin admits that he is unable to be free and joyous *with* Natalya but fears life *without* her.

Rakitin's emotional stasis is akin to that of Natalya's husband, Islayev, who, in the second exchange, tries to express his feelings to Rakitin but instead ends by talking about what he wants in his workmen. Yet almost mid-phrase and much to Rakitin's bemusement, Islayev stops and says, 'there was a time, strange as it may seem — when — when I was as busy but much, much less confused' (*MC* 30). And then, because he suddenly asks after Natalya, it is as though he leaves unsaid, 'before I was married.' Islayev's use of the word 'confused' is used by Friel to establish a sequence of echoes from this point onwards. 'Confusion' appears to counter the references to growth and functions like part of a repressed schema. It recalls Friel's Nikolai Kirsanov's repeated use of 'splendid' and 'wonderful' to smooth over or mask chaos or his Bazarov's use of 'chasm', indicating his sense of utter emotional confusion. The word also serves as a cue for Belyayev and Natalya. Like a youthful version of Islayev, Belyayev arrives looking for the weir plans and eager to

accompany Islayev and Rakitin to examine the latest project. But Natalya arrives, intervenes and waylays the student.

In this third exchange (radically condensed by Friel), Natalya questions Belyayev closely about his past and his plans (*MC* 31-33). He answers her unself-consciously but aware of the social gulf that separates them, then he discloses that his sister's name is Natalya. Isaiah Berlin translates Natalya's response as 'curious', Freeborn as 'odd', and Nicolaeff as 'strange' but Friel's Natalya declares 'that's my name', a statement that is at once childish egocentric *and* proprietorial. This is a small alteration but it underlines Friel's Natalya's capacity to swing between the roles of coloniser and colonised, a dynamic expanded in the subsequent dialogue where, coquettish at first, Friel's Natalya reveals something of her personal insecurity. Friel condenses the dialogue so that there is virtually no explanation of her childhood and, most significantly, excises Turgenev's embedded reference to Antigone (discussed later). Then, as in the original play, in a gesture of considerable intimacy, Friel's Natalya extends her hand to Belyayev which he takes and kisses in 'a moment of confusion and warmth.' Arguably Friel exposes his Natalya as a more calculating if confused schemer.

Characteristic of much of Turgenev's (and Chekhov's) dialogue, these three exchanges and gestures echo one another and show the characters to be confused and evasive. The three men, like Natalya, are unable to confront the disjunction between what they say and what they mean. In Friel's hands such exchanges assume a truncated quality, heightened by the Irish idiom. The dialogue of Turgenev's males contains a comment on the passage of time and an intimation that pain and fear are linked to love. Islayev and Belyayev are seen to have common interests, energies and innocence. Both Rakitin and Islayev indicate that they love Natalya, fear losing her and dread life without her. Both are seen to be equally over-awed and confused by her. Idiomatically, Friel emphasises the men's reactive, even colonised posture in relation to Natalya in these first three exchanges. By re-deploying these three exchanges in close proximity before the end of Scene Two, Act One, (as opposed to Turgenev's Act One) Friel reveals not only the men's beleaguered situation, but also the fact that Natalya, albeit subconsciously, has discarded the two older men and is infatuated with the youthful Belyayev. Moreover, the confusion and tensions apparent in the third exchange between Natalya and Belyayev are heightened by two arrivals. First they are discovered by Shpigelsky (*MC* 33) and this situation has barely settled when Vera rushes on, once again in pursuit of Belyayev (*MC* 34). At Vera's first interruption, Natalya had simply chastised her ward for her dishevelled appearance and dismissed Shpigelsky's matchmaking proposition (*MC* 27). Nevertheless, Natalya's subsequent dialogue with Shpigelsky reveals that

subconsciously she now perceives Vera not as her child-ward but as a rival (*MC* 35). Glossing over her indiscretion with Belyayev, she offers Shpigelsky her arm indoors and, referring to Bolshintsov's proposal, says, 'I'll give that some thought' (*MC* 35). Whether Natalya recognises her motives or not, audiences see that her attitude towards Vera has changed radically.

### ix balancing the heart and head

By altering these three exchanges (and, in particular, excising the Antigone paradigm) Friel *shows* Natalya's change of heart and head to be abrupt, even ruthless, so that it appears as though the dramatist's sympathy and focus lie elsewhere.<sup>31</sup> In fact, he is showing that language is inextricably bound up with identity and relationships, personal and political. Repeatedly he shows that what people say and what they mean, are contradicted by their intentions and actions. Among Natalya's thoughts, words and actions, for example, there is no fixed or reliable correspondence because her unconscious, unattended and denied, can always disrupt and destabilise. Friel does not present this situation as a *fait accompli*. On the contrary, he suggests (especially through Shpigelsky) that through intuition, our desires and our darker side can be addressed and brought into some sort of dialectic light. This is the moral struggle to obtain what the folk idiom describes as a balance between heart and head. Turgenev's play expresses this in the slow unfolding of the incomplete and contradictory fragments of understanding or self-consciousness of *all* these characters and the confusion and complexity of their motivations. Largely through compression, Friel accelerates and amplifies this process. But when Friel's Shpigelsky, referring to the Islayev household, states, 'they are no different from the rest of us ... sinful mortals like us all' (*MC* 89), he encapsulates both writers' philosophies. For them, we are all, irrespective of circumstances, capable of challenging ourselves and, by confronting the unknown, of moving towards a clearer understanding of what we say and what we mean. *A Month in the Country* is not a morality play but it offers a strong moral debate and nowhere is this made more clear than in the thoughts and words of Friel's Natalya, more obviously confused and unsubtle than her sophisticated and eloquent original.

As indicated above, in the third exchange, between Belyayev and Natalya, Turgenev embedded the paradigm of Antigone in Natalya's account of her childhood. Turgenev did this not to soften response to Natalya or to vindicate her actions, but as part of his slow, subtle unfolding of patterns. Arguably, it was intended to show half-realised flickers of understanding in her divided mind *and* the recrudescence of the repressed and its tragic

consequences upon others.<sup>32</sup> Turgenev's Natalya indicates that, like Antigone, she feels as though she will never be free from paternal domination. She recognises that tyranny can double as love, dominant and terrifying, and implicitly reveals this to Belyayev while apparently talking about her son:

You see, Aleksei Nikolaich, I am naturally anxious to make a practical man of [Kolya]. I don't know if I'll succeed, but in any case, I should like him to have happy memories of his childhood. Let him grow up free - that is the main thing.

She then opens up:

I was brought up very differently, Aleksei Nikolaich; my father was not unkind, but he was irritable and strict ... Everyone in the house, beginning with my mother, was afraid of him. I remember, when he sent for us, my brother and I used to cross ourselves and hope no one was looking. My father would sometimes caress me, but even in his arms I would freeze. My brother broke with him when he grew up — you may have heard about that — I'll never forget that dreadful day ... I remained an obedient daughter to my father to the very end — he called me his solace, his Antigone ... he became blind during his last years ..., but no matter how tender and gentle he was with me, it didn't efface the memories of childhood — I was terrified of him — a blind old man! In his presence I never felt free — perhaps traces of those early fears, that long imprisonment, still haven't completely disappeared. I know that at first I seem — how shall I put it? — cold, isn't that it? — but I see that I'm telling you about myself instead of talking to you about Kolya. I only wanted to say to you that I know from my own personal experience how much better it is for a child to grow up in freedom ... Now, I don't suppose *you* were ever much held down as a child? (MC 37 Berlin)

Here, Turgenev's Natalya says that as a child she was manipulated and divided against herself and that in order to survive she learnt how to mask her feelings of terror and loathing, a device which she now recognises has grown habitual. She was a victim of emotional oppression; her childhood was blighted by a fear that has left its mark. And while Natalya has yet to recognise and address fully the impact of this experience (especially in relation to her child-ward Vera), the speech closes with two considerations of others, her concern for Kolya and her enquiry about Belyayev's childhood. Hence, at this juncture, Turgenev's Natalya does not appear to be a totally demonic type.

This is a point augmented by two other confessional statements, both of which occur in Turgenev's Act Three when Natalya confides to Rakitin, 'This [Belyayev] has infected me with his youth, that's all. I have never been young myself, Michael, since my childhood until now ... ', and later when she states, 'I am now convinced of one thing, Rakitin, one can never answer for oneself, one can't guarantee anything. We often don't understand our past



... So how can we possibly answer for the future! One can't bind the future in chains of iron!' (*MC* 66, Berlin; see also Freeborn *MC* 62 and 75).

Friel re-writes and expands both of these statements so that his Natalya appears to be out of control and 'almost hysterical.' She tells Rakitin: 'maybe I'm going off my head, Michel ... a kind of temporary ... derangement ... slightly demented, Doctor Shpigelsky — not profoundly, not permanently — but today, here, now ... I feel unhinged ... and dangerously irresponsible — giddy, heady, almost hysterical with irresponsibility' (*MC* 58). Both the ellipsis and Natalya's casting of Rakitin momentarily as 'Doctor Shpigelsky' are significant and Friel accelerates her sense of mounting confusion with two appeals for help (*MC* 58). Misconstruing Rakitin's concern as anger, Natalya then states that Belyayev has taken 'possession' of her head and 'intoxicated' her, but that, with 'help' she will 'sober up' (*MC* 58-59). The exchange ends with Rakitin saying that it is not anger he feels: 'I pity you for God's sake! You are pitiful, Natalya!' (*MC* 59). Friel's stage directions indicate that 'he regrets this immediately' and that she 'cries quietly' (*MC* 59) so that the exchange appears to end in sympathy with Natalya. It seems that Friel deletes the Antigone paradigm, stripping his Natalya of any possibility of spectator sympathy, and expands these fragmented confiteor statements in order to expose her more ruthless side, especially in relation to Vera. The episode which follows, with Vera, confirms such a reading. Here, Friel has Natalya herself undercut her own pleas for sympathy and help. In this exchange with Vera, couched in almost conspiratorial, school-girlish terms, Natalya is, in fact, remarkably composed and calculating. Vera has only two speeches of more than four lines whereas most of Natalya's exceed this, underlining the imbalance of power (*MC* 60-65). Natalya first raises and then appears to dismiss the Bolshintsov proposal as 'ridiculous', but proceeds to use it as a way into Vera's confidence concerning her feelings for Belyayev. Whereas Turgenev's Natalya persuades Vera to consider herself as a daughter, Friel's Natalya tells Vera that she *is* her 'daughter' and then her 'sister.' As Friel's Vera struggles to recognise and articulate her feelings, Natalya's impatience is palpable, barely covering her jealousy and building to white-hot anger. Vera misconstrues this and offers sympathy and aid, but is dismissed by Natalya and sent back to her music practice (*MC* 65). This return to music here is a small but nevertheless significant addition by Friel, one that is tragically echoed in the small but touching coda (discussed later). By the end of this exchange, Friel's Natalya is revealed to be not only totally calculating but self-ignorant. The combination is explosive.

### x nature ill-harnessed

The individual's potential for self-destruction is revealed in Natalya's soliloquy following her manipulation of Vera. Although radically condensed by Friel, its content reveals the extent of Natalya's treachery and jealousy, the intensity of her own passion for Belyayev *and* her ambivalence towards Vera, Rakitin and Islayev (MC 65-66). Friel's cuts emphasise the split between Natalya's private and public personae so that her jagged expression and barbed words echo her own earlier statement to Rakitin that 'nature is blunt and crude and relentless. *Nature cares about nothing except itself — surviving and perpetuating itself*' [my emphasis] (MC 43). Friel recreates these very qualities in the way Natalya cross-examines her own tortured *nature* and reveals the gap between her felt and professed 'values', the imbalance between her heart and head.

Friel's Natalya recognises her desires and impulses but denies the need to address them or the duplicities they will inevitably entail. The reason behind Friel's excision of the Antigone paradigm (which essentially interrogates patriarchal forces and unresolved conflict) begins to emerge. He emphasises the danger of all individuals' repressions and delusions. Natalya is not an Antigone, selfless in love and fearless in her execution of an unwritten law, nor is she, as Islayev, Rakitin and Belyayev describe her, the 'kindest', most 'astonishing', 'illuminating' 'epicentre' of the house. In order to illuminate *their* illusions and Natalya's own ambivalence, Friel excises the Antigone paradigm and heightens her flights of irrationality, casting her as 'crude and relentless' (MC 43) in her headlong pursuit of 'fulfilment.' She asks others to rescue her but she has yet to locate herself.

As with Chekhov's Natasha, Friel deliberately coarsens and darkens Natalya so that both women appear to be victims of their own illusions *and* of psycho-social forces. Natalya and Natasha, like the sisters in *Living Quarters*, *Aristocrats*, *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Three Sisters*, are emotionally repressed individuals, but this condition is shaped as much by their own illusions and divisions of heart and head as by patriarchy. In Natalya these pressures combine, causing a grave contraction of senses and critical judgement so that she is both colonised and coloniser.

To further illustrate the intensity of Natalya's ambivalence and denial, Friel adds two apparently mundane pieces of dialogue. In one, Natalya confesses to Rakitin that she 'snapped' at Lizaveta for her snuff taking, and accused her 'poor grandmother' (Anna Semyonovna) of being 'a damned domineering mother' who had made Arkady 'such a mess' (MC 58). But as Natalya's subsequent judgements and actions show, her confessions of pettiness simply cloak her own unaddressed 'terrible disquiet' (MC 59). She admits, 'Michel,

I am the real mess' (*MC* 58), but externalises it as 'intoxication', 'possession', 'a kind of temporary ... derangement' (*MC* 58). Her explanation is coupled with a plea for Rakitin's help but, symptomatic of her state of denial, she gives no indication that *she* intends to confront and redress her ruthless treatment of others. It is alterations such as these that make Friel's play profoundly moral.

Dominated by her father, Turgenev's Natalya in turn dominates those who love her, allowing her past to undermine her present. In one sense, by omitting the Antigone paradigm, Friel breaks up Turgenev's text, commenting upon the complexities and instabilities of love, loyalty, freedom and their absence. But he does this in order to alter radically the psychological focus of the play, bringing it more into line with the conditions of its reception in an Ireland marked by blatant and profound contradictions.

Turgenev's focus in *A Month in the Country* is the tragic consequences of human self-division played out in the disjunction between characters' words. Friel observes the same sad consequences of self-division but offers no historical excuses, rationalisations or correctives. Like Turgenev's, his foremost commentator, Doctor Shpigelsky, is a mirror, reflecting the dangers of self-delusion and the willingness to dominate or be dominated. In places, Friel's challenge to our speculative powers is so low key that it passes almost like ripples of hackneyed jokes or localisms. Shpigelsky's prosaic joke, for example, about a patient who imagines himself to be a pair of curtains, actually invites us just as much as the patient to pull ourselves together. In Friel's *A Month in the Country*, humour, both banal and ironic, is consistently used to challenge, destabilise and re-define consciousness. In performance, elements of this were apparent to the critics Dowling, Hingerty and Hill.

Friel reiterates Turgenev's insights about subjective judgement, repressions and unaddressed issues and affirms that conflicting *emotions* can undo the tenuous ties between words and meaning and actions and, therefore, form no basis for intellectual decisions. This is encapsulated in a brief but telling four-part sequence of words and actions between Natalya and Belyayev:

Natalya: And you'll leave tomorrow?

[He kisses her and at the same time swings her round]

Aleksey: Tomorrow.

[Again he kisses her and swings her round].

Natalya: Tomorrow?

Aleksey: Tomorrow.

[Again he kisses her and swings her round].

Natalya: Tomorrow?

Aleksey: Tomorrow.

[Again he kisses her and swings her round. Michel enters.]

Natalya: Tomorrow.

Aleksey: Tomorrow - tomorrow- tomorrow.

[Again he kisses her and swings her round].

Natalya: No, don't go, Aleksey - don't go - don't ever go.

Oh please God no.<sup>33</sup>

Following Natalya's confessions to Belyayev of 'gameplaying' and infatuation (*MC* 81), this sequence of self-contradictory words and actions (*MC* 83), illustrates more than anything that, despite *moments* of intense self-questioning and insight (*MC* 72 and 81), Natalya has no lasting self-awareness. Herein lies the key to her crisis. In constant denial and without coping mechanisms, Natalya makes resolution and accommodation impossible. Beset by her 'enemy within', she acts accordingly, wilfully, 'just slightly deranged ... unhinged ... And dangerously irresponsible —' (*MC* 58).

In Turgenev, it is the slow and painful revelation of Natalya as an individual frayed by the denial of her own human incompleteness that makes her both pathetic and dangerous. But Friel's Natalya infects everyone with whom she comes into contact and with whom she is alternately mild-mannered and monstrous, according to the victim-victor polarities of her psyche. If Turgenev's Natalya inspires love and terror, Friel's swings more rapidly between being a 'satin gown' and a brutally selfish individual. She cannot at the last say, like Euripides' Phaedra, 'we know the good, we apprehend it clearly. But we can't bring it to achievement'.<sup>34</sup> 'Deranged' by 'the normal', she can only mutter 'I wish you were all gone' (*MC* 103). In saying this, Natalya echoes the negative energy of Chebutykin.

Friel emphasises Natalya's emotional powerbroking by making her idiom, in moments outside her control, more petulantly childlike and brutal than any of the genteel cadences in the 'standard' English translations he consulted. On such occasions, Friel's Natalya's idiom becomes pronounced and harsh, like that of his Natasha. Whereas Turgenev's Natalya calls Shpigelsky a 'provincial Talleyrand' and 'a master of intrigue', Friel's Natalya calls him 'a

huckster, a mean-minded, ugly-minded, conniving peasant' (MC 44). Again, when she discovers Belyayev has absconded, she exclaims, 'with a burst of sudden passion', 'how dare he, the pup! ... Who the hell does he think he is! Well he's not walking away like that! I'm not one of his college sluts! He'll go *if* I say he goes! He'll go *when* I say he goes!' (MC 102). Her sense of self-importance overflows into utter self-delusion: 'who is he to decide I haven't the courage to throw all this up and go with him! If that decision is to be made, it'll be my decision - not his! The bastard!' (MC 102). It may appear to be stating the obvious but while much of this type of idiomatic pointing would be totally unsuited to a genteel Russian household it is precisely the tenor which makes Friel's version an Irish *drame intime*, framed in the tenor and norms of 'everyday' Irish life. Only minutes earlier she had declared that she had loved Belyayev from the first day she saw him and confessed that she had been 'calculating and treacherous and ... ridiculous' in her 'game-playing' pursuit of him (MC 81-82). The intensity of Natalya's outburst recalls that of Synge's Pegeen Mike when, faced with her own lack of courage for the open road, she admits that she has lost 'the only playboy of the western world.'<sup>35</sup> Natalya's initial declaration of love is subsequently equalled by the vehemence of her rage over Belyayev's departure. The petulant child has been thwarted in her game of 'teacher-student' (a relationship commented upon by Shpigelsky's 'curtains' and 'teacher-pupil' jokes (MC 85)), part of the symbolic growth and self-knowledge geography of the play.

Such humour, together with local idiom and irony, is used literally to talk to audiences, to make obvious the recrudescence of conflictual patterns of stated values and conduct, such as the declaration of love (MC 81-82) and its reversal (MC 102). Through these devices Friel deconstructs any notion that the word and its meaning amount to anything fixed or composite. In fact, in uncritical subjectivity and self-delusion, the 'known' is revealed to be unpredictable and related to the unknown aspects of self.

On one level, Friel's interventions make his Natalya psychologically less complex, more brutal and more pathetically absurd than the original. Turgenev's Natalya is, by her own admission, 'cunning, secretive [and] despotic' (MC 100 Berlin). But such modifications (like his diminishing of Bazarov) indicate that Friel's emphasis lies on the decline and fall not so much of powerbrokers such as Natalya as of *all* the characters, and on the multiple possibilities of addressing self-division. The unity of the play and its enquiry into subjective judgement combine to form an experience greater than their sum. This same unity of parts shapes *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, critiques of culture and poverty, individual and socio-political colonisation. In these five plays Friel examines the toll of dispossession

upon human mind and spirit, by foreign and familiar forces. This dispossession is located in inadequate self-knowledge and manifest in silences and emotional outbursts so that socio-political criticism remains (as in Chekhov and Turgenev) elusive but woeful in impact. Nevertheless in Friel's own plays as much as in his rewritings, the inadequate self-knowledge of characters and their relationships with others confirm the truism that the personal is political. This is particularly apparent in his re-reading of Turgenev's gentry, Rakitin and Islayev, especially through the eyes of Shpigelsky and Belyayev.

### xi Rakitin, Belyayev, Islayev

Friel's alterations to Rakitin and Islayev are relatively minor. Both men are affected by Natalya. Audiences see the rapturous embrace of Natalya and Belyayev and how this impacts upon Rakitin, leading him to declare that love is about 'dissembl[ing], inflated language, emotional palpitations, the heaving passions ... foolishness.' Even here he does not *express* his feelings openly but wraps his hurt in an eloquence that ironises his own behaviour and recalls Belyayev's response to Natalya's gameplaying and declaration of love (MC 82).

Friel's Rakitin (the most 'isolated, wretched' figure in the play and Natalya's faithful *amour courtois*), is Belyayev's opposite. Whereas the latter symbolises nature's vitality, Rakitin *talks* of nature in terms so abstract as to alienate Natalya. Friel's Rakitin is old beyond his years and exceedingly refined; less 'substantial' than Turgenev's ineffectual lover. At the end of Act One Scene Two he is able to smile at himself 'tagging along at the rear' (MC 53). Such patterns of behaviour (like that of Chekhov's three sisters) appear to give meaning to characters' lives but are often more routine. Friel's Rakitin knows himself to be 'poor old Rakitin ... a hanger-on, the second man, made for humiliation, invites it with his "loyalty", his subservience' (MC 94).<sup>36</sup> By contrast, Turgenev's Rakitin, when rejected, is forthright; in words that foreshadow Bazarov's cynical advice to Arkady Kirsanov, he tells Belyayev that

every kind of love, whether happy or unhappy, is a real calamity if you surrender to it wholly ... burning hatred is hidden within the most ardent love! You will think of me when you long for peace as a sick man longs for health ... You'll find out what it means to be tied to a petticoat, to be a woman's slave, to feel the poison in one's veins - and how humiliating, how agonising such slavery is! ... and finally, you'll learn what miserable trifles are bought at such high cost (MC Berlin, 112).

In a fit of despair similar to Bazarov, Turgenev's Rakitin equates love with poisonous infection, and describes Nature as harmonious and human society as discordant. Friel's

Rakitin warns the student that ‘all love is a catastrophe ... An endless process of shame and desolation and despair.’ ‘When’, he adds, ‘you are stripped — you strip yourself! — of every semblance of dignity and self-respect’ (MC 94). Independence and freedom — qualities of mind he has never practiced — are all that matter. The pleasures of life, he claims, especially a woman’s love, are to be grasped because fleeting and fickle. Friel dilutes and ironises Rakitin’s denunciations so that the student sees through to the man’s pain. Belyayev says, ‘I really am sorry you’ve been so ... hurt’ (MC 95) and in a moment tinged with embarrassment but nonetheless spontaneous, the men embrace and Rakitin ruffles the student’s hair. Their gestures suggest a new level of understanding between the two. Rakitin’s compassion, taxed by his desire for Natalya and his regard for Islayev, alerts Belyayev to the impossibility of acting as Natalya’s rescuer, the role she has cast him in.

With hindsight, Turgenev’s Belyayev may well be seen as a rascalion outline of the darker shadow to come, Bazarov. But in Friel’s hands, Belyayev is another version of outsiders such as Skinner, Yolland and Gerry Evans. Such characters enter the complacency of a closed system and, often unwittingly, catalytically reveal its repressed aspects, opening it up to possibilities of change.

Friel’s Belyayev personifies ill-informed youthfulness, living intensely. Infected by Natalya’s declaration of love and in a eulogy doused with irony, he tells her that she is ‘magnificent’ and ‘exotic.’ ‘This house, this style, this grace, this ease, this refinement, this symmetry, this elegance’, he declares, make him ‘mute with awe’ (MC 82). Thus Belyayev crowns his catalogue of mythologies (regarding Natalya) with a paradox that reveals him to be both comical and colonised. Like Yolland, intoxicated by his notion of ‘Ireland’, Belyayev describes Natalya as ‘the core, the essence, the very epicentre [of the Islayev household], holding it all in place, releasing, dispensing its wonders’ (MC 82). In fact, she is more like Seamus Shields’ Kathleen ni Houlihan, unstable, unkind and fanatical in her relationships with others.<sup>37</sup> But Belyayev (like Yolland) is enamoured of his own mythmaking and cannot resist adding to it.<sup>38</sup>

It seems as though he is utterly intoxicated but minutes before the end of Act Two, Scene Two, Friel’s Belyayev meets and tells Vera: ‘I had a strange talk with Michel a while ago; and looking at him, listening to him, suddenly there were no more *confusions*: Get out - get out! get out! ... I’m so far out of my depth, Vera, I can scarcely breathe’ [my emphasis] (MC 100). In almost childlike terms he recalls their shared antics and concludes that wonderful as the month has been, ‘we’ll have forgotten it all by Christmas’ (MC 101). Thus,

Friel's Belyayev expresses the incompleteness, the ephemerality and the absurdity that underscore much human experience.

Friel re-writes Belyayev as an antic, carnivalistic spirit to underline his youth and thereby suggest why he is capable of madcap behaviour. And it is as precisely this 'madness' that Belyayev describes to Vera his infatuation with Natalya: 'that's exactly what I'm saying; that was part of the hysteria, the madness' (*MC* 100). This admission comes shortly after Rakitin's talk on the trials of 'love' (*MC* 94) and after Belyayev has agreed, under duress, to drive Natalya to Spasskoye (*MC* 96). So when he tells Vera that 'I can scarcely breathe' (*MC* 100), it is clear that his experiences are prompting him to flee from these 'kind and thoughtful and intelligent people' (*MC* 100). In Friel's hands, Belyayev epitomises the limitations of youthful awareness, of self and others, but an awareness nonetheless that is capable of growth (and in this sense he is akin to Friel's Bazarov).

Belyayev is the same youth who literally swept Natalya off her feet (*MC* 83) and subsequently announces to Vera that it is all over, 'A Chinese squib - a quick blinding flash — then nothing' (*MC* 100), the same figure whom Natalya hails as 'different', 'unjaded', 'free' and full of 'nature' and whom she later describes as a 'pup' and a 'bastard' (*MC* 102). Friel cuts Turgenev's description of Belyayev pursuing critical essays, chasing squirrels, hunting wild birds and riding cows. Instead, his Belyayev admits to being a ditherer and (like another Christy Mahon) is happiest in the company of young people, running wild. Friel also omits Belyayev's account of his impoverished childhood and instead gives him an 'itinerant labourer' father who was (like Old Mahon) 'never sober.' Moreover, Friel's Belyayev (like Christy Mahon, Gar O'Donnell and Friel's Bazarov) delights in parodying people and particularly Schaaf and Lizaveta. He constructs kites (like the child Michael in *Dancing at Lughnasa*) and makes fireworks. On one level, these childlike activities illustrate Turgenev's perception that nature's passions are indeed like fireworks, spectacular but short-lived<sup>39</sup>. But on another, they show us the gap between youth and age, the complexity of self-awareness and the contradictions and incompleteness of felt experience. Convincing parallels can be drawn between Friel's Belyayev and characters like Synge's Christy Mahon, Kavanagh's Tarry Flynn and Friel's Yolland and Bazarov. Such characters are symbols of growth.

Thus, by contrast with 'the dam enthusiast', Islayev, caring, practical and mild-mannered, the jestful Belyayev appears almost reckless, a reminder of difference and a promise of inevitable change. But in this other Friel play of 'fathers and sons', if Belyayev illustrates the plurality of being denied by the older men; he also represents the desire to relate *and* the terror of relationship. His youthful ignorance and eventual escape counterpoint both



Rakitin's disillusionment and Islayev's ill-founded sense of release at the end of the play. Islayev never comprehends Natalya's behaviour nor the exodus of Rakitin or Belyayev. Trapped by a code of 'discretion' and 'duty' (MC 92) Islayev remains to look after his 'astonishing' wife (MC 31, 91, 92) and his 'astonishing' new winnowing-machine (MC 93). The workings of the machine, like those of Natalya, bewilder Islayev whose enthusiasm for both is matched only by his confusion regarding their workings.

But as Friel's script unfolds, for 'astonishing' we begin to read 'confusing', for such is Natalya's nature, affecting and infecting others, and especially those who love her. Islayev, Rakitin and Belyayev all at some point declare themselves to be confused and astonished by her, and totally in her power. They each signal their confusion to Natalya before the end of Friel's first scene.<sup>40</sup> This heightens their personal ambiguities, making them more victim-like than Turgenev's characters, whereas the real victim of the piece, Vera, is in Friel's version less tragic because, like his Fenichka, Arkady and Katya in *Fathers and Sons*, she takes responsibility for her heart and her head and is capable of regenerative measures.

Very early in the play Turgenev establishes patterns of repressed desire, libidinal impulses, and notions of romantic love and fulfilment. Friel emphasises Natalya's 'wants' but his Rakitin 'talks' and does not 'dare' (MC 19). Later Turgenev uses two core scenes to demonstrate the fickle nature of their desires and, more importantly, their denial of the *impermanence* of such demands. In the first, Natalya tearfully embraces Rakitin and begs him not to leave, and is discovered in this posture by Islayev, his mother and Belyayev. Rewritten, Friel's Natalya declares 'for God's sake don't leave me. My love — my love — my love — oh my love' (MC 68). This quadruple repetition relates to Natalya's four declarations of 'I want' to Rakitin in Act One, Scene One (MC 19), and is echoed in Act Two, Scene One where Natalya is discovered (by Rakitin) embracing Belyayev (MC 83).

Friel brings these two scenes close together so that twice Natalya's repressed passions return but in the arms of different men, both of whom she casts as rescuers and neither of whom can function in that capacity because her needs (like theirs) are sourced in inadequate self-knowledge. Similarly, Shpigelsky's five part 'never' declaration to Vera also comments on illusions of 'love.' The economy with which Friel consistently reiterates and intensifies Turgenev's ethos is striking; in both scenes he uses brief and simple dialogue the impact of which expands with repetition. These echoes are amplified through association and illustrate the conflicts and gaps in the emotional intelligence of all these characters.

Friel makes two incisive additions directly bearing on Islayev's emotional intelligence. The first is largely non-verbal, underlining Islayev's emotional reticence or inability to

confront the ambivalence in his marriage, and his wife's relationship with Rakitin. Islayev's confusion arises in response to the unexplained Natalya-Rakitin embrace (*MC* 68) and another in the gazebo (noted *MC* 92). Now, at the beginning of Act Two, Scene Two, in a 'tense and agitated' mood, Islayev sets about 'updating survey maps' (*MC* 87).<sup>41</sup> Apparently referring to the proposed survey, he says, 'It doesn't make sense. I just don't understand it ...' (*MC* 87). The ellipsis signals his continuing confusion at having found Natalya in Rakitin's arms, repeatedly sobbing, 'My love' (*MC* 68). At that point, 'almost inaudible', Islayev had asked, 'What — what's all this?' (*MC* 68). Thereafter he is absent from the stage and apparently waits for an explanation. There is the strong suggestion that his practical skills can harness nature but that he is unable either to make sense in his emotional life or to confront its ambiguities. He is still utterly confounded at the beginning of Act Two, Scene Two when Anna Semyonovna intervenes.

At this point, Friel's second intervention allows Anna Semyonovna to help her son construct the necessary emotional apparatus of accommodation. She gives Islayev (and us) a concise vignette of her married life. Whether her account is fact or fiction, it becomes indicative of Friel's philosophy — facing and reformulating personal and other instabilities — and it is an affirmation of all that Friel values: the family, children, individual endeavour and a sense of continuity in the face of inevitable change.

When Anna Semyonovna says that it was a pity Arkady never knew his father, the possibilities of emotional re-construction (or a consoling fiction?) begin. Anna becomes another of Friel's storytellers. In a manner similar to that of her description of John Field<sup>42</sup> she tells Islayev that his father 'was such a handsome man; and so talented; and so gracious; and so endlessly kind.' She continues that she loved him 'without reservation' despite the fact that every month during their fifteen years of marriage, he went to Moscow on business but also 'to visit a lady there that he loved' (*MC* 90). The matter was never raised Anna Semyonovna says, 'because he loved me, too ... so what would there have been to say ... except wounding things' and, she concludes, 'he would have been so proud of little Kolya' (*MC* 90). Here again, Friel exercises artistic licence and crafts a plea for understanding based on tolerance and accommodation. This is one purpose behind his alterations to the play's implicit comment on the fragility of life and relationships. And it is at this point that, without judgement, Friel shows us the function and necessity of 'consoling fictions.' Deane's phrase, 'consoling fictions', accurately describes the coping mechanism that many Friel characters adopt. In the midst of social disintegration and the breakdown of personal spheres, such

fantasies can be interpreted as a substitute for unattainable reality or the inability to bring about change.

It is significant that Friel concludes Anna's plea on a note of hope symbolised by the child. Anna Semyonovna encourages her son to balance his hurt and confusion against the positive outcome of his marriage, Kolya. Whether or not Friel's Anna is cast as a placator, calling once again for understanding and tolerance, or whether she is revealing her own illusions, is not a central issue here. For Islayev's subsequent acceptance of Rakitin's love for Natalya strongly suggests that Friel's purpose here is to move us, through self-confrontation, away from individual conflicts towards consideration of a wider context. Irrespective of the emotional dynamics, implicit in this movement is Friel's recognition of the need for personal and political accommodation and the necessity to construct 'a middle ground between the country's entrenched positions.'

Friel confirms this movement towards a larger necessity for understanding and accommodation in Islayev's exchange with Rakitin. In response to the latter's admission that he loves Natalya, Islayev simply says, 'it's understandable; that's what it is; quite understandable.' He continues: 'we must try to — to — find some way of conducting our lives together — the three of us — as best we can — with discretion — without too much hurt — as best we can ... That's what we must do, please ...' (*MC* 90-91).<sup>43</sup> Clearly his mother's revelation has helped him towards this position but Friel adumbrates Islayev's own coping strategies in the mapping 'business' as he moves from 'I just don't understand it' (*MC* 87) to 'it's understandable' (*MC* 90-91). The word 'understandable', like the repetition of 'game', 'confusion', 'mess' and 'astonishing', appears mundane and when combined with the ellipsis, it registers as weak and uncertain. But Friel uses this idiom routinely throughout the play to emphasise the more elaborate intrigues afoot and once again reinforces the realisation that language can reveal or conceal, weld or divide.

Islayev's use of 'understandable' does not imply that he is suddenly enlightened or magnanimously accepting. On the contrary, its use, like Nikolai Kirsanov's 'wonderful', suggests that, even at the end of the play, Islayev still has not fully understood the events, the effect of the student outsider, or indeed why Rakitin and Belyayev are leaving. Something of the fragility of all relationships informs Islayev's statement to Rakitin, 'we can't afford to lose a good friend like [you]. Amn't I right?' (*MC* 104). But this sad irony is not sentimentalised. Rather, when Rakitin explains that Belyayev left in order to spare Vera's feelings, Islayev responds — 'good heavens! Everyone's leaving. Everyone's being so noble. The world is suddenly becoming a wonderful place, Michel' (*MC* 106) — registers as

highly ironic because audiences see that among these privileged people, communication and relations remain far from 'noble', 'wonderful' or even clear.

## xii Vera, Shpigelsky

More pronounced than Friel's redrawing of Rakitin or Islayev, are his alterations to the survivors of this rural idyll, Shpigelsky, Lizaveta, Vera, and Katya and Matvei.<sup>44</sup> The last two, like Shpigelsky and Lizaveta, move through their courtship with little pretence. In simple language they make their intentions and hopes clearer to one another than do their social superiors. Katya tells Shpigelsky, '[Matvei's] responsibilities are now my responsibilities and I am happy to share them with him' (*MS* 98-99). These four characters are not Shakespearian pairs married off to restore patriarchal balance but their prospective marriages argue well for reciprocity and accommodation, qualities not readily apparent in the Islayev marriage. If, initially, their several exchanges seem hesitant, and their subsequent arrangements prosaic, through their honesty, these four admit to the pressure and therefore the *preciousness* of time and human companionship. In some respects, Katya and Matvei, like Shpigelsky and Lizaveta, are unremarkable people in that they neither 'astonish' nor 'confuse' anyone. And because of this, their attitudes and actions consistently serve as ironic counterpoint to that of their privileged employers. They accommodate and do not require to be rescued.

Friel underlines the enormity of the task of healing self-estrangement and colonisation through Vera, the character most abused for her innocence and unrewarded for her compassion and understanding. Turgenev draws her with great tenderness and compassion, qualities which she extends to Natalya, despite her guardian's betrayal (*MC* 81). Friel alters Vera in a manner similar to his re-drawing of Bazarov, in that both grow as a consequence of painful contact with others.

At the beginning of the Natalya-Vera discussion regarding Bolshintsov and Belyayev, Vera meekly tells Natalya, 'I'm in your power' (*MC* 61). But by the end of that day, as Natalya's machinations become clear, Vera disables Natalya's power with a statement of fact. Turgenev's Vera tells Natalya, 'you over-estimated your power' and 'I am your rival', but then disintegrates in an emotional apology. Friel's young woman openly identifies the manipulation: 'for God's sake stop this game-playing! I'm no longer a child, Natalya — nor your ward that you can manipulate — nor your younger sister that you can kiss and worm secrets out of and then betray shamelessly. *I am a woman, Natalya, and I am going to be treated like a woman*' (*MC* 81). She also informs Natalya that she is not her rival (*MC* 81),

openly admitting, 'I wish to God I were - but I'm not - I'm not ...' (MC 81). Unlike her original, she makes no apology and leaves as a resolved if upset and frightened young woman. With these additions Friel suggests that Vera's maturation occurs almost within the painful round of one day. Turgenev's Vera talks of being 'successfully crushed.' Friel's is more phoenix-like. Moreover, her ability to identify her feelings far surpasses that of her guardian.

Friel's Vera matures to question authority and the authenticity of words such as 'esteem', 'affection' and 'love', suggesting that 'maybe they are synonymous' (MC 79). She recognises Belyayev's effect upon Natalya: 'you have demented her.' Even more remarkable, Vera's anger over her guardian's duplicity is outweighed by her sense of pity for Natalya because, young as she is, Vera understands that Natalya is 'so confused. She doesn't recognise the unique any more' (MC 79). Vera's comprehension, like her scepticism, marks a growth in emotional intelligence that will protect her against the power and confusion of Natalya.

Friel's final alteration also concerns Vera and emphasises her sad-wise growth. At the end of the play, in an echo of the beginning, a John Field nocturne is played somewhere off-stage. Vera's elderly suitor, Bolshintsov, asks Matvei, 'Is that Miss Vera?' (MC 109). Bolshintsov, who never managed to grasp the 'language' of courtship or love, simply says, 'nice ... nice' (MC 109), and the stage directions indicate that 'the music continues for a few seconds; then stops abruptly in mid-phrase. Bolshintsov stands there, his face raised, still smiling, waiting' (MC 109). Repeated twice, his single (banal) word, 'nice', is stunningly inadequate as a description of either the music or the player *but* it is heartfelt. For some, it may well underwrite the conflicts and absurdities of the Islayev household. Bolshintsov has not been infected with the confusions of the Islayev household, nor is he cast as a hero, 'rescuing' Vera. With Bolshintsov's closing word Friel once again underlines not so much the inadequacy of the words we use as our frequent failure to make our meaning and intentions clear to others, as a matter of *conscience*. Friel's simple, touching coda affirms that Vera's qualities and strengths will be appreciated by her elderly suitor. She faces marriage as the three sisters face tomorrow, as Maire Chatach faces emigration, as Agnes and Rose Mundy leave for London. Each is an encounter with the unknown, a possible source of anxiety but also of hope. And hope, as Friel states, is 'the well spring of humanity.'

Vera, even more than Friel's keenest survivor, Shpigelsky, finds, if not a balance of heart and head, then at least an accommodation. Friel's final statement about Vera's future is signalled through her music. It 'stops abruptly mid-phrase' (MC 109) as Friel returns us to

the beginning of these four days. His comment that ‘life is a mystery and reality, a construction of our own invention’<sup>45</sup> encapsulates the tragic unfolding of incompleteness in the Islayev household where every soul is indeed ‘a dark forest’ but some, like Vera (and as her name signifies) move with faith.<sup>46</sup>

In terms of social diagnosis, Turgenev’s Doctor Shpigelsky is a most comprehensive and astute observer, a brilliant masked chorus, able to survey all but unaffected by most events. His name, Shpigel’ski, suggests the German word for ‘mirror’ - *spiegel* or the Polish word for ‘spy’ - *sypieg*. But if he is of foreign descent, an outsider, his name (Ignati) and patronymic (Ilyich) suggest he is Russian.

Friel’s Shpigelsky functions both as a mirror and a magnifying glass, focusing attention on the discontent and deceit endemic in this household by emphasising the dangers of illusion and, particularly, notions of romantic love. In interview, Donal McCann stated that

an occasion of confession and self-searching is given to each character but Shpigelsky alone places all the cards on the table in that he tells Lizaveta that he wants a wife with whom he can be himself, “a moody man” but neither “mean” nor “jealous” [but that] ‘this “ruthless honesty” did not offset the fact that Shpigelsky matchmakes for purely mercenary reasons.’<sup>47</sup>

Turgenev’s Natalya calls him a ‘provincial Talleyrand’ implying, with unintentional irony, that *he* is a master of intrigue, unprincipled and self-interested. Friel’s Natalya tells Rakitin, however, that Shpigelsky is impertinent and two-faced but amusing. The tenor and attributes are instructive. Indeed her pronouncements on both Shpigelsky and Belyayev highlight not only her own intense ambiguity but her keen instinct for deprecation, almost as a form of neurotic self-preservation. Natalya’s subjectivity reveals itself most acutely in her willingness to take offence, and her ability to project cunning and shift her guilt on to those she judges — her victims.

Throughout Turgenev’s play Shpigelsky, even more so than Raikitin, appears keenly aware of Natalya’s mercurial moods and judgements. He is both intelligent and amusing and his honesty is a compound of self-knowledge and self-interest. This is revealed in his marriage proposal to Lizaveta, in which he suggests that for a marriage to survive, it must be based on an absence of illusion. This is a sentiment Friel retains and has his doctor amplify and reiterate to Vera with regard to Bolshintsov’s proposal of marriage.

Friel localises Turgenev’s plain-speaking doctor incisively, giving him a repertoire of jokes which are as provocative and instructive as Schaaf’s dreadful malapropisms. Several critics, including Ian Hill and Tim Harding, commented that Friel’s doctor was given a vital

edge by the performance of Donal McCann.<sup>48</sup> McCann himself states that he found Friel's Shpigelsky to be 'a brilliant exercise in self-preservation and ruthless honesty, just beneath Shpigelsky's public surface. ... In *A Month in the Country*, no less than in his other works, Friel taps into difference, the difference in language, its healing and destructive possibilities, such as we see in *Faith Healer*.'<sup>49</sup>

Shpigelsky's observations and jokes, like Schaaf's malapropisms, function as destabilising devices, forming idiomatic and syntactic cruxes which comment upon the apparent calm of the Islayev house. Examples of this are Schaaf's 'Hartz are trumpery', and Shpigelsky's 'pupil-teacher' and 'curtains' jokes. All of these suggest that these 'beautiful people' should open their eyes to their own illusions, pull themselves together and reconsider their needs and wants. One particular joke or pun made by Shpigelsky concerns the 'astonishing' but problematic winnowing-machine which symbolically mirrors Natalya. He says, 'some you winnow, some you lose-ow' (MC 97), immediately apologising four times but in a way which mimics the insincere apology of Natalya to Rakitin and the equally empty subsequent one to Vera. It is through these ironic repetitions that Friel localises *and* amplifies Turgenev's intricate psychological patterns so that, as in the original text, a language of apparently fixed codes and familiar surfaces masks deep conflict.

Friel has both Natalya and Shpigelsky, for example, use the word 'mask.' Natalya says she wants to drop her mask, twice gestures in this direction (MC 57-59; 81-82) and twice immediately and treacherously reneges (MC 60-65; 83). These incidents serve to demonstrate her unconscious lurching between the public and private worlds. Shpigelsky, however, understands that the mask is a mechanism separating the private from the public. Referring to the Islayev household and the gentry in general, he tells Lizaveta: 'if all you know about me is what they know about me, then you don't know me at all.' 'They're civil to me,' he adds, 'because I relieve their boredom. But in their hearts they hate the peasant in me. And I clown for them because that masks how deeply I detest them' (MC 75). Thus he describes the mask of survival he has found it necessary to assume and, revealing something of his own psychology, warns Lizaveta: 'if you agree to marry me, you must know you're not marrying the laughing, fawning, ingratiating Shpigelsky. You're teaming up with the bitter, angry, cunning peasant' (MC 76).

Yet when Vera asks Shpigelsky whether or not Bolshintsov would hit her if she 'displeased him', the matchmaker and wily peasant is unmasked. In a moment tinged with self-reproach 'he stares at her in amazement ... takes her in his arms as if she were a child

and rocks her', saying 'Never — never — never — never — oh never.' This repetition of absolutes is suspect, a point implicitly emphasised by his unfinished declaration:

Oh my sweet, sad-eyed child, what can I say to you? He's old; and fat; and stupid; so stupid he thinks my jokes are funny. And yes, he's quite well off. And he seems to like you. . . And he's kind enough, I suppose. What more can I tell you, little one? If I thought for a moment that love was a necessary - even desirable - ingredient in these matters, then I'd say: pass this up. But since I don't ... [He shrugs] (MC 99).

Shpigelsky's words are both disarming and instructive. He knows that words can wound, heal or help individuals to survive. Friel omits Turgenev's description of Bolshintsov as being malleable, 'a lump of dough, you can simply take and mould him ... [he's] not a man, he's a gentle dove' (MC 116 Berlin) and instead his rascally doctor admit that '[Bolshintsov's] a bird in hand, I suppose ... .' (MC 99). All of Shpigelsky's conniving matchmaking is balanced by this moment of honesty couched in a cliché but opened up by the unfinished sentence. When Vera says she will marry Bolshintsov, Shpigelsky does not break into joyous rapture like his original; instead he drops his mask further and asks Vera to wait. When she refuses, he simply 'spreads his hands and nods his head' (MC 99). At moments such as this (like the dance that almost happens in *Three Sisters*), Friel's rewriting, through gesture and ellipsis, communicates a sense of the limits of self-knowledge and the necessary uncertainties which ripple throughout his own works

### xiii conclusion

*A Month in the Country* is a portrait of human conflict, absurd and tragic, manifesting at a personal level discontent and self-division. For this reason, it remains modern and, as rewritten by Friel, applicable to modern anxieties. Friel's Natalya, like Natasha in *Three Sisters* and Kate Mundy in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, is formidable. And herein lies one distinct difference between Turgenev's and Friel's portraits of discontent and self-division. Turgenev gives us a long and deeply suggestive account of Natalya's troubled childhood, held by her father as his 'solace', as his 'Antigone.' Friel omits this. In doing so he indicates that his observations do not rest on myths, or gestures of closure such as judgement. Rather he ponders the consequences of unresolved conflict and prods us towards accommodation in relationships. Friel alerts us to this not through or because of Natalya, but through all Turgenev's sad characters and through his own resonance of commonplace single words and phrases, affirming the need for authentic self-locution, understanding and accommodation.

Turgenev's Natalya and Odintsova, and Chekhov's Natasha, are portraits of conduct in varying stages of self-awareness. Friel leaves the originals intact in so far as he abstains from



explanations of conduct recognising that these portraits are diagnoses, presenting the causes and symptoms but not the cures. As in all his own plays, no less than his translations, he lays before us all the conflicting points of view and all the possible clues to human healing, action and reaction, threaded through the texts in echoes of single words and phrases. Through their combination life is shown to be fluid and complicated; the plurality and fragmentation of the individual are often half-recognised or denied like symptoms of disease. If, however, the eloquent cadences and sad observances of Turgenev's text strike a chord of disillusionment, then Friel's re-writings sound a different, even exigent, note — of self-help and *hope*.

We can, Friel suggests, take charge of our intuitions and use these to interrogate the given. We can challenge repressive forces by admitting to our own psychic darknesses and bringing them into some sort of dialectic light. The necessity to 'think twice' about the words and gestures we use and the meaning we intend, is a beginning. Such efforts, Friel indicates, do not necessarily transform us but they make us question the past and its impact upon and relevance to the present. Like Turgenev and Chekhov, Friel argues that a balance of heart and head is necessarily an ongoing process.

<sup>1</sup> In addition to a literal translation by Christopher Heaney of Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, Friel consulted a translation by Isaiah Berlin, London: Penguin Classics, 1981. He has an acquaintance with the 'acting version' by Emlyn Williams, with an introduction by Michael Redgrave (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976), a translation by Ariadne Nicolaeff specially prepared for the 1974 Chichester Festival Theatre production, with an introduction by the director, Toby Robertson (London: Samuel French, 1976) and a translation by Constance Garnett from *Ivan Turgenev: Three Plays (A Month in the Country, A Provincial Lady, A Poor Gentleman)*, Conn. AMS Press, 1976 and Hyperion, 1977). Information supplied to author, 31 Jan. 1996. In addition to these I have also consulted a translation by Richard Freeborn, *A Month in the Country* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Sub-titled *The Death of the Heart* and described as a comedy in five acts. Hereinafter quotations from Friel's version noted as (MC), followed by page numbers and those from Berlin's 1981 or Freeborn's 1991 translations will be noted (MC), followed by page numbers and respective surnames.

<sup>3</sup> Leonid Grossman, "Leonid Grossman on Turgenev." *The Completion of Russian Literature. A Cento*. Compiled by Andrew Field. London: The Penguin Press, 1971. 147-152.

<sup>4</sup> Seeley. *Turgenev, A Reading of his Fiction*. 1991. 342, endnote 49. See also "Introductory Note." *A Month in the Country*. Berlin. 1981. 7-17.

<sup>5</sup> See: James Fenton. "Turgenev: a passion for reality." *The Sunday Times* 22 Feb. 1981.

<sup>6</sup> See Berlin "Introductory Note." *A Month in the Country*. Berlin. 1981. 7-17.

<sup>7</sup> Mikhail Portugalov. *Turgeniana*. Orel: Gosizdat, 1922, cited in Berlin Introduction 1981. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Berlin. Introduction. 1981. 13.

<sup>9</sup> Berlin itemises Shpigelsky's sarcasms about 'an officer of the Imperial Army; his open admission of his hypocrisy towards the gentry, towards the landowners whom he deceives because they are stupid and ridiculous and without whose patronage he cannot survive'; his mocking words about "backwoodsmen", his account of his wretched childhood and beleaguered mother, and his immense resentment of the system of patronage as evidence of this. Berlin. Introduction. 1981. 13. See also Freeborn. Preface. 1991. vii-xx.

- <sup>10</sup>. See Freeborn.1991. xvi.
- <sup>11</sup>. Tim Harding *Sunday Press* 9 Aug. 1992.
- <sup>12</sup>. Ian Hill *The Guardian* 10 Aug. 1992. 31.
- <sup>13</sup>. For example, Eliza in "The Sisters" in *Dubliners* speaks of the new carriages' 'rheumatic wheels' or in *Finnegans Wake*, the Citizen's pun on 'civilisation' and 'shphilisation.'
- <sup>14</sup>. See Cairns and Richards. 1988. 168-9.
- <sup>15</sup>. Brian Friel. "Introductory essay." *A Month in the Country* after Turgenev. Dublin: Gallery Press, 1992. 10.
- <sup>16</sup>. Interview. Friel-Fusco. Greencastle, Donegal 18 Jul. 1996.
- <sup>17</sup>. A three-handed game similar to Whist in which the trump is determined by bidding. Arguably, the number of players required possibly relates to the two inter-tangled triangles within the play.
- <sup>18</sup>. Friel replaces Alexander Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* used by Turgenev with Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. Victor Shklovsky maintains that Sterne's fascination with word-play and linguistic indeterminacy in *Tristram Shandy* makes this the most typical Irish novel. See: Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis. *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Nebraska: Lincoln, 1965. 37.
- <sup>19</sup>. French — 'tromper', 'tromperie', 'trumpery' — 'showy and worthless stuff', Chambers Dictionary.
- <sup>20</sup>. For example, Tusenbach's complaint that he cannot play without music, in turn, relates to the repressed passion of Masha who, since her marriage, has ceased to play. Similarly, Friel's Vera stops mid-phrase at the end of *A Month in the Country* and the Mundy sisters' eruptions into and cessations from dance in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, discussed later.
- <sup>21</sup>. Kay Hingerty *Cork Examiner* 15 Aug. 1992
- <sup>22</sup>. Mary Carr *Evening Herald* 5 Aug. 1992.
- <sup>23</sup>. Desmond Rushe *Irish Independent*. 5 Aug 1992.
- <sup>24</sup>. David Nowlan *Irish Times* 5 Aug. 1992.
- <sup>25</sup>. Noeleen Dowling *Evening Press* 5 Aug. 1992
- <sup>26</sup>. Emer O'Kelly *Sunday Independent* 9 Aug. 1992.
- <sup>27</sup>. Patsy McGarry *Irish Press* 5 Aug. 1992.
- <sup>28</sup>. Interview. Deane-Fusco Dublin. 20 Aug. 1996.
- <sup>29</sup>. Ian Hill *The Guardian* 12 Aug. 1992.
- <sup>30</sup>. Friel also omits a line spoken by Tatyana, Pushkin's heroine of self-truth in *Eugene Onegin* (ch. 8, stanza 47) and quoted by Natalya: 'Why should I seek by cunning to deceive?' (The full significance of this may well be lost on any modern audience outside of Russia). For Freeborn Tatyana was Pushkin's supreme example of the realisation that nothing in life was more important than respect for truth to oneself and one's conscience; for Dostoevsky (according to his 1880 Pushkin speech) she was the apotheosis of duty and constancy. Natalya is the antithesis of Tatyana. Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia, Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism 1860-1930*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1978. 15-16. See also Berlin 1983. 34.
- <sup>31</sup>. In this regard, see Anthony Roche's article "Ireland's Antigones: tragedy, north and south" in *Cultural Contexts and Literary Idioms in Contemporary Irish Literature*. 1988. 221-250 and Christopher Murray's article "Three Irish Antigones" in *Perspectives in Irish Theatre*. 1991. 115-29. Independently, both authors suggest that Sophocles's *Antigone* has been rewritten by Irish writers to comment upon the socio-political crisis in Ireland and particularly the exercise of the Special Powers Act whereby people could be interned without trial. Clearly, by excising the Antigone-Natalya paradigm, Friel intends to credit his Natalya with no semblance of justice).
- <sup>32</sup>. However, whereas Sophocles' Antigone was moved by filial piety and inspires both piety and pity, Turgenev's Natalya felt imprisoned by her father and subsequently inspires fear.

- <sup>33</sup>. This scene is reminiscent of similar emotional eruptions in *Dancing at Lughnasa* (written the previous year) where fragments of music and dance *show* the return of the repressed through the liberated body and demonstrating how emotions that are denied can unhinge words and actions.
- <sup>34</sup>. Euripides. *Hippolytus The Complete Greek Tragedies*. Trans. David Grene. Eds. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. London and Chicago: Chicago UP, repr 1975, lines 380-81. Friel's own play, *Living Quarters, after Hippolytus* (1977), confirms his interest in this archetypal enquiry into human conduct.
- <sup>35</sup>. John M. Synge. *The Playboy of the Western World*. Classic Irish Drama. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981, particularly 128-131.
- <sup>36</sup>. Friel's Shpigelsky actually tells Rakitin this at the end of Act Two, Scene One, 86.
- <sup>37</sup>. See Seamus Shield's description of Ireland in *The Shadow of a Gunman in Three Plays* by Sean O'Casey. New York: Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, 1968. 110.
- <sup>38</sup>. Cf. Joe Brennan of "Foundry House" in *Saucer of Larks*. Brian Friel *The Diviner*. Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 1982: 75-90.
- <sup>39</sup>. Worrall, referring to the theme of sexual awakening and repression, points out that flying a kite in Russian, '*zapuskat' zmeya*', literally means 'to release a serpent.' See Nick Worrall, *Nikolai Gogol and Ivan Turgenev*. London: Macmillan, 1982: 176-177.
- <sup>40</sup>. Turgenev's Act One is pared down to Friel's Scene One. In Berlin's translation, Vera's declaration to Natalya (MC 69) echoes that of Rakitin (MC 34). Both Rakitin and Islayev declare they cannot live without her and Belyayev tells her he is 'in awe of her, astonished [and] terrified' of her (MC 100-102).
- <sup>41</sup>. In Friel's work map-finding is always synonymous with self-location. Cf. *Translations, Fathers and Sons* and *Making History*.
- <sup>42</sup>. And redolent of Madge (in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*), Trilbe (in *The Loves of Cass McGuire*) and Maggie (in *Dancing at Lughnasa*).
- <sup>43</sup>. It could be argued that Friel's Islayev, in his desire for understanding and accommodation, follows his mother's lead and advocates the acceptance of the (uneasy) status quo. This line of interpretation is supported by Friel's omission of Turgenev's Othello references and his alterations to Vera so that she tells Belyayev that although Natalya betrayed her, he, Belyayev, has demented and confused Natalya.
- <sup>44</sup>. In Turgenev's play, in different aspects, these characters comment upon the Islayevs. The relationship between Katya and Matvei, influenced by his mother, echoes that of Natalya and Arkady whereas the relationship between Shpigelsky and Lizaveta, prosaic and contractual, offers a complete contrast. Individual language styles reveal the varying gaps between characters' words and intentions, especially when exposed to the scrutiny of monologue.
- <sup>45</sup>. Interview. Friel-Fusco. Greencastle, Donegal 18 Jul. 1996.
- <sup>46</sup>. In Russian 'Vera' means faith or belief; the adjective '*vernyi*' means correct, right or true. I am indebted to Dr. Gordon Spence for drawing my attention to this.
- <sup>47</sup>. Interview. Donal McCann-Fusco. Wellington 7 Mar. 1996.
- <sup>48</sup>. Ian Hill. *Guardian*. 10.8.92.; Tim Harding. *Sunday Press*. 9 Aug. 1992.
- <sup>49</sup>. Interview. Donal McCann-Fusco. Wellington 7 Mar. 1996.

**Chapter VI The Value of Competing Translations**

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## Chapter summary

Chapters III, IV and V scrutinised Friel's three translations, analysing his use of Turgenev's and Chekhov's examinations of the socio-political forces of change besetting Russia and how he brought them to comment upon contemporary experience, particularly in Ireland. This chapter considers Friel's position within the Irish dramatic tradition in terms of re-reading and rewriting strategies and briefly in relation to predecessors, O'Casey and Yeats, as well as his contemporary, Seamus Heaney. It does so in order to affirm the value of competing translations, their interrogative position in relation to certain cultural contradictions (especially that of a unified culture) and proceeds to examine Irish theatrical and pedagogical response to Friel's translations and concludes that, for various reasons, they remain under-read.

### i bonne raison?

The value of Friel's translations cannot be presented in terms of clear-cut re-appropriation or of creative resistance to cultural assimilation. As indicated at the beginning of this thesis, to evaluate these works against the Russian sources or through a fixed translation or re-appropriation code is to ignore Friel's transformatory intention and the reasons why he identifies with Turgenev and Chekhov. In the midst of crisis, Friel's theatre, imbued with his vision of impermanence, searches for a phrasing that expresses a sense of self and life for the psychic, social and historical human condition. The same conceptual phrasing has been sought by dramatic predecessors as different in approach and chronology as, for example, Nahum Tate with his 1696(?) adaptation of Shakespeare's *Lear* and Edward Bond with his 1971 version of the same play. Like Robert Garnier's 1580 version and Anouilh's 1944 adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, they are removed from but related to their sources. Such rewritings confirm successive generations' compulsion to return to and re-read particular paradigms, using them to confirm or contest the conditions of a new age. They seek to create their own processes of comment and discrimination — to translate anew. And while none, paradoxically, can be 'new', and entirely independent of its historical implication, central to understanding each translator's intention is the acknowledgement that words such as 'image' and 'original' are empiricist terms, part of the lexicon of a universalist representationalist system of theories. According to such a system, in order to establish its degree of representativeness and correctness, the 'image' or 'copy' is compared against the 'original', like a would-be mirror. In the wider context, such a system, committed to establishing mimetic adequacy, proposes a predominantly mimetic view of the relation between the text

and a given pre-constituted reality. Hence, a universalist approach seeks to establish the representative ‘truth’ of a text using an essentialist criterion of evaluation and does so by ignoring the validity and expressive intention of a rewrite. Such a system of evaluation could, for example, discard Friel’s *Fathers and Sons* despite the fact that just as Turgenev’s novel was intelligible for his Russians, so Friel’s play is meaningful for his audiences. And while ‘intelligible’ and ‘meaningful’ are not strictly overlapping, synonymous terms, they propose that the novel *and* the play possess their own expressive value and relevance. This is their *bonne raison*.

Friel’s use of Turgenev and Chekhov reflects his discontent with what he saw around him, an ‘era of hostilities — of scratching, hurting, biting, mauling, cutting, bruising, spitting’ (*FS* 67). Some understanding of his alterations and his translation intention in general can be gleaned from Friel’s literary inheritance, with its weighty socio-political inflections and, in particular, the competing use of transcendental paradigms of heroism and blood sacrifice by O’Casey and Yeats.

## ii competing paradigms — dramatic and historical

With his Dublin trilogy, and especially *The Plough and the Stars* (1926), O’Casey deconstructs such transcendental signifiers encoded in imperial and republican clichés and inducing many to sacrifice their lives. Produced at the Abbey some ten years after the 1916 Rising, *The Plough and the Stars* triggered a riot which initially masqueraded as outrage at the affront to modest Irish maidenhood (reminiscent of the *Playboy* riots of 1907) but progressively revealed its nationalist tenor. The ‘martyrs’, after all, had been canonised, the ‘terrible beauty’ had been born and Oliver Shepherd had been commissioned to produce the statue of Cuchulainn for the Post Office. O’Casey’s play was inflammatory, both to the puritans and to those who identified with the cause of Irish nationalism, because it focused on the anti-heroic behaviour of uniformed patriots and located true heroism in the lives of the women in the tenement slums — even though these are querulous, loudmouthed and sometimes absurdly idealistic. The play remains boldly contestatory and, in this sense, O’Casey’s trilogy, together with *The Silver Tassie* (1928) and *Red Roses for Me* (1943), are themselves competing translations, contesting the fixed paradigms of British imperialism, the Republican Nationalist breviary and the literary nationalism of Yeats, Corkery and Hyde.

The characters who populate O’Casey’s Dublin tenements are part of Friel’s inheritance. And while he translates anew, it is in relation to O’Casey’s characters and audiences that Friel’s rewritings can most productively be understood. He re-constructs Turgenev’s

Bazarov, for example, along lines similar to those of O'Casey's socialist Covey, an angry young man intent upon changing the world. Equally, Friel's Pavel Kirsanov may well be understood by audiences as kin to O'Casey's Uncle Peter, who bickers and duels with the Covey and struts about in the extravagant uniform of the Irish Foresters.<sup>1</sup> In like manner, Friel's Arkady may well be interpreted as a Jack Clitheroe type but one who, instead of going to war, sets about putting his own house in order.

O'Casey's Nora insists that her husband, Jack Clitheroe, an Irish Citizen Army officer, is driven by vanity and Irish nationalist rhetoric to take part in events which fill him and his compatriots with fear. Their agitation, Nora maintains, is born of generations of frustrated inactivity and the worry that they have failed to live up to nationalist paradigms which require nothing less than martyrdom as confirmation of commitment. In a similar way, Turgenev's Bazarov and Arkady, young men of the 1860s, are totally frustrated with their fathers who were the young men of the 1840s, so that the novel reveals how successive generations have been subjected to extrapersonal socio-political and economic conditions. This is a recurrent theme in the Dublin trilogy and, especially, in *Red Roses for Me*, discussed later.

Like O'Casey, Friel wishes to steer clear of stereotypes and heroicising blood sacrifice. But, unlike O'Casey, he does not confront political issues polemically, endorsing instead individual critical endeavour. The weakening of Bazarov and the emboldening of Arkady are instructive of Friel's intention, one quite distinct from the novel, that of signposting possibilities of change. Friel's *Fathers and Sons* implicitly encourages change not only within the three families dramatised but also in the relations between Ireland and England. Bringing the characters of all three translations into line with established Irish dramatic types, and particularly those of O'Casey, but in a contemporary idiom, reveals much about Friel's rephrasing and intention and poetico-ethical imagination.

Against the historical darkness that followed the 1916 Rising, Tommy Owens, one of many O'Casey innocents, declares to Donal Davoreen, the shadow of a gunman, 'I'd die for Ireland.'<sup>2</sup> O'Casey, with the Dublin trilogy and particularly *Red Roses for Me*, and Friel with plays such as *The Freedom of the City* and *Volunteers*, ask 'why should this be necessary?' What kind of State requires such sacrifice? *Red Roses for Me* dramatises the plight of the underprivileged. Ayamonn Breydon, activist and artist, is modelled on Jim Larkin, capable, as Donal Davoren was not, of inspiring change. Finding his fellow Dublin workers demoralised and abject, Ayamonn writes poetry to inspire them to create change. In Act III, during a visionary sequence, the head of Ayamonn is lit as by a lightning strike and resembles 'the severed head of Dunn-Bo<sup>3</sup> speaking out of the darkness.'<sup>4</sup> Ayamonn's listeners are

illuminated by this light and, inferentially, by his words. A dance follows in which Ayamonn joins with the street vendor, Finnoola, in a moment of intense release. Here O'Casey blends history and myth in an epiphanic moment, reminiscent of Yeats's more esoteric works, *A Full Moon in March* (1935) and *King of the Great Clock Tower* (1935), but closer in style and intention to Dionysiac moments in Friel's *The Freedom of the City* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

In Act IV of *Red Roses for Me*, Ayamonn's poetry provides the vision but its realisation rests with the people, so that during the Easter vigil (implicitly recalling the 1916 Rising) they protest, strike and Ayamonn is killed. In *Dancing at Lughnasa* the same sense of protest against oppression is created. As poetry and music moved Ayamonn's listeners, so reverie and traditional music invade and momentarily invigorate the bodies of Friel's women and, likewise, their protests against containment end in silence. Agnes and Rose Mundy flee their family home into an exile that signals the continuance of ignorance and alien authority. In a similar manner, in *The Freedom of the City*, after brief moments of ritual and protest, the death of the three civil rights marchers confirms that the old hierarchies of power and privilege remain intact.<sup>5</sup>

In the midst of the present crisis in Ireland, Friel questions this climate and, like O'Casey, asks audiences to examine the apparent link between language and reality, between past and present paradigms and violence. He insists (as does Heaney in *The Cure at Troy*, discussed later) that because unquestioning loyalties to authority (Green, Orange or any other) are constructed, they can be deconstructed. National self-consciousness, for Friel, is an embodied condition, ideally open-ended and ongoing. Imagination, while fundamentally historical, can, he insists, imagine what was *before* the present *impasse* and, by critically remembering and re-membering past differences, project future possibilities, talking not only with itself but with its other. This call for transformation marks the work of Friel and Heaney as mediational and anticipatory.

The source of extreme attitudes, for Friel (and Heaney), lies in uncritical identification with rival stereotypical nationalisms and their competing paradigms of faith and fatherland which ignore their own imperial echo. In a tradition where paradigms have been used divisively, Friel questions not only their use and influence but, more importantly, our understanding of them. In this sense, his plays (and particularly *Dancing at Lughnasa*) are antithetical to Yeats's use of Christian mythology in *Calvary* (1920) and his translations of Sophocles' *King Oedipus* (1928) and *Oedipus at Colonus* (1934).<sup>6</sup> Yeats, it can be argued, used these works to re-vision the Republican breviary and support Pearse's heroics of blood sacrifice in the Calvary tradition. Promoting redemptive sacrifice and unconditional loyalty,



these plays are, like Friel's translations, other examples of language appropriation and translation and yet they remain largely unchallenged as such; no doubt because they reflect the values of the dominant class and bolster the image of Ireland projected by Church and State.

In the past (as discussed in Chapter Three) highly influential English productions of Shakespeare and Chekhov have produced an homogenised British theatre, controlled by and reflecting the values of dominant class interests. Similarly, the *raison d'être* of the Irish Literary Theatre was, according to the foundation notes of Lady Augusta Gregory, 'to show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and easy sentiment as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism.'<sup>7</sup> When Gregory calls upon 'the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us', she is, in fact, suggesting that decolonisation can be secured through a unified national identity.<sup>8</sup> (This was the conservative agenda behind Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* and Maud Gonne MacBride's *Dawn*.) But, in pursuit of truth, beauty and their unifying nationalist anti-colonial ideology, the Irish Literary Theatre (which in 1904 was to become the National Theatre) did not acknowledge the fact that such 'unity' would deny the differences which, in time, erupted in civil war and bifurcation, and created a whole section of impoverished and alienated individuals in what became 'Northern Ireland.' Committed to portraying a prescribed unified, national identity, the early Irish theatre functioned as an homogenising institution, an instrument of bourgeois ideology that bore no relation to social and material reality and, in particular, to the position of women in post-Independence Ireland. For Friel, theatre (with its paying audiences and limited numbers) can serve to legitimise or challenge interpretative behaviour and cultural conditions.

Ironically, his reluctance to pronounce recommendations, which separates him from essentialists like Corkery and Hyde, (and particularly the latter's polemic "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland"), has been interpreted by some as aesthetic fence-sitting, while others construe it as republican propagandism. This is not surprising in a climate where O'Casey, who challenged the national theatre and demythologised the rhetoric of blood sacrifice, is still frequently interpreted as a republican propagandist rather than an anti-imperialist socialist. And this despite the fact that O'Casey tells us in his letters, 'I was glad to get away from Ireland's ignorance and humbug, religious and political. De Valera's "most spiritual State in the world" was too for much me.'

### iii other Troys

In 'The Arts and Ideology' (1984), Seamus Deane argued that 'the existing political arrangements on this island have only a limited future [and] in the present interval, before the formal changes take place, ... we should in some way try to re-member, re-understand a very complex heritage which has been simplified and reduced into sectional and sectarian patterns.'<sup>9</sup> He claimed that such a theory of re-reading and re-memembering could be seen in practice in the plays of Field Day and of Friel. The poetry and translations of Seamus Heaney, another Field Day director, also provide rich resources in this critical enterprise.

In *Wintering Out* (1972), *North* (1975), *Station Island* (1984) and *Seeing Things* (1991) Seamus Heaney talks about 'governing' our own tongues and 'trusting in our own personalities', emphasising the necessity and value of self-criticism. But, equally, Heaney sees that these same personalities, deprived of a critical sense of self and culture, can also engender violence. In a manner antithetical to the revivalism of Yeats, Heaney explores this thesis in *Sweeney Astray* (1983)<sup>10</sup> and in *The Cure at Troy* (1990).<sup>11</sup> Both of these works, like Friel's translations, require audiences to examine their sympathies and loyalties and, in doing so, contribute to the processes of re-reading self-determination in relation to differences identified in Deane's article.<sup>12</sup>

Like *Translations*, *The Cure at Troy* explores the ambiguities of loyalty and betrayal, the forces of possible change and decay. And like *Translations*, it employs myth as a two-way street. Using the betrayal of Philoctetes, it asks how we can learn to think and feel in a fresh, free way after the wounds are cleaned. Ultimately Heaney conjures up 'the longed-for tidal wave / Of justice' that will make 'hope and history rhyme' (CT 77). This is, he intimates, 'reachable from here', if we 'believe in miracles / And cures and healing wells' (CT 77). Thus the despair created by the impasse in the North is re-read through an enabling blend of myth and history. Suffering is transcended but, Heaney cautions, 'Suspect too much sweet talk / But never close your mind. ... I leave / Half-ready to believe / That a crippled trust might walk / and the half-true rhyme is love' (CT 81). Hence the end of the play talks back to Heaney's prefacing quotation (from Auden) addressed to his audiences: 'O stand, stand at the window / As the tears scald and start; / You shall love your crooked neighbour / With your crooked heart.'

The genesis of this translation, for Heaney, was the dilemma of the boy, Neoptolemus, symbolic of all youth, caught between parties neither of whom he wished to betray.<sup>13</sup> Discussing the genesis of *Sweeney Astray*, his translation of the Middle Irish text *Buile Shuibhne*, the tale of a seventh-century Ulster king demented by battle and religious censure,

Heaney describes his initial (1972) intention as being to make the unionist population more aware of the history of pre-colonial Ulster, and by extension, more sensitive to nationalist grievances: 'I simply wanted to offer an indigenous text that would not threaten a Unionist ... and that would fortify a Nationalist (after all this old tale tells us we belonged here always and that we still remain unextirpated).'<sup>14</sup> Five years later when he returned to the task, Heaney adopted a more constricted approach, 'more obedient to the metrical containments and the battened-down verbal procedures of the Irish itself.' This more 'literal approach finally yielded more' and signalled a political distancing as Heaney concentrated more on the 'quarantined otherness of *Buile Shuibhne* as art' than on his own complex involvement with 'the matter of Ulster.'<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, *Sweeney Astray* can still be read in terms of Heaney's initial intention without any diminishing of the work's relevance or political over-determinedness. Its 'quarantined otherness' is recuperated and re-vitalised by Heaney in the same contestatory manner as in Friel's translations.

If, however, Friel's translations, like Heaney's, provide resistance to cultural assimilation, they nonetheless offer no judgement and no agenda, so that the absence of overt political prescription cannot be construed as fence-sitting. On the contrary, such translations demonstrate the necessity for a more oblique line of re-appropriation, requiring audiences to recognise that their cultures are constructions, effected by a colonial inheritance, and the product of Anglo-Saxon and Irish imperialism. Friel's *Translations*, in particular, shows how closely Irish cultural nationalism has become intertwined with the imperial ideology that frames it. Recognising and addressing this irony, he insists, is the responsibility of the audience and the burden of self-determination.

As Desmond Maxwell and Richard Pine suggest, modern Irish theatre, through a poetics of fracture rather than paradigmatic unity, began with *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* and reached its fullest expression in *Translations*. In my analysis of *Translations*, I suggested that Friel often encourages a type of classical pluralism in a society where differences are accepted as equal. Such a philosophy is wholly understandable in the light of the past three decades in Ireland, a situation which, in microcosm, reflects a crisis of Western values similar to that which beset Turgenev's and Chekhov's Russia. The intermingling of cultures and the creative effect of these collisions have brought about a situation wherein virtually everything is challenged. As a consequence, as Thomas Kilroy shows us in *Talbot's Box* and Friel in *The Communication Cord*, uncertainty and bogus values prevail. Such plays show sections of Ireland as hamstrung by affluence and impoverished by inequality and nostalgic 'values.' These plays reflect a crisis. Their characters (like Friel's Gerry Evans) espouse a kind of

pluralism and freedom for all but they do not, in fact, know what they believe in or value. With *Fathers and Sons*, in particular, Friel sanitises Turgenev's Bazarov because he too threatens to erase the skeletal tradition to which some cling in the face of enveloping materialism. Had Friel reproduced Bazarov, he might well have been accused by some of reiterating Pearse's agenda of blood sacrifice. Instead, he initially enhances Arkady Kirsanov as a nihilist, only to have him join forces with his father, affirming the value of humanism.

Like O'Casey before him, Friel debunks the notion of nationalist heroism and replaces the relationship of the word to the world it purports to describe with questions about the relationship between the spoken word and the listener, between words and meaning. Unlike Yeats, Friel *asks*, 'what have you heard, what have you seen, what do you understand from this and how does it relate to your world?'

As Said and Deane suggest, a literary system may be said to consist of at least two components: one is an inventory of literary devices and genres; a second the concept of what literature is, or should be, within the social system. If the first manifests prototypical characters, situations and symbols, the second is influential in the selection of themes, using those which relate directly to the prevailing social system.

Mikhail Bakhtin maintains that 'as a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the world, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.'<sup>16</sup> Like Bakhtin, Friel recognises that language is not simply a matter of words (referents of a normative system) but of understanding the expressive (i.e. the intentional) qualities, accent, context and use. And because all words and forms are populated by intentions — our own and those of others — communication becomes a matter of perpetual translation of such differences. In this context, Friel's translations are not representations of an essence, Russian or Irish, but products of the specific and contingent conditions of their transmission, demonstrating that 'Irishness' cannot be defined against the homogenising and hybridising influence of anglicisation. Like Joyce, Friel uses hybridisation to accent Hiberno English, ghosting it with the absent presence of Gaelic and thereby enriching and legitimating the (familiar) variant over the (foreign) standard. In this way hybridity functions transformatively, operating as a interventionist and productive energy, crucial to translating and understanding post-colonial reality. When Deane comments that in any post-colonial re-territorialisation, 'the *practice* of language becomes the thing; hybridity galvanises the variant over the given in acts of creative

resistance', he highlights two aspects apparent in Friel's rewritings. Firstly, that by challenging the closed socio-linguistic system called 'standard English' and by encoding it with diversity (Bakhtin's *raznojazycie*<sup>17</sup>), the translations become working, practising examples of the decolonisation process. Secondly, even when Friel's Russian characters make the language their own, populating it with their own semantic and expressive intention, there persists beneath their idiomatic rhythms a wariness of language and an alertness of the indeterminacy of meaning.

To compare and evaluate such rewritings according to a fixed schema serves no purpose, but to disregard them as inferior or derivative is to ignore not only the autonomy of literature but its capacity to reveal social developments. The method and intention behind the rewritings form but part of their value. Yet if Friel has created other versions of Chekhov and Turgenev in another language, Hiberno English, how has it been received by the existing discourse? Has it become part of what Bakhtin calls the 'internal stratification' current 'in any given language at any given moment of its historical existence'? The short answer is both yes and no.

#### iv institutional response

How have Friel's translations been received and examined? Why, for example, was Friel's version of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (which premièred in Derry and travelled to the Royal Court) overlooked by Ireland's National Theatre, who chose instead to use Michael Frayn's 'standard' translation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* for their 1982 production? Why are Friel's translations virtually ignored in schools and universities, fixing their attention upon his 'stag[ing] of an Ireland of the imagination' and his 'enquiry into artistic power in *Faith Healer*'?<sup>18</sup> Why confine examination of *Translations* 'as a nationalist play directed against Irish republicanism',<sup>19</sup> or ask 'what attitudes towards the decline of the Gaelic culture of Ireland are implicit in *Poems of the Dispossessed* and *Translations*'?<sup>20</sup>

Clearly Friel's translations and their relationship to his own plays are largely ignored. Currently, school and university enquiries are generously wide, 'Friel on community, the individual, women, his craft, his world-view, his ideas on the relativity of perception, storytelling, etc.'<sup>21</sup> or narrow, as reflected in the questions posed in the last three years of G.C.S.E. papers. There, set passages from *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* examine 'the extent Gar and his father are responsible for the lack of communication between them', asking whether Gar's 'light and playful mood' has 'a more serious side' and using lines 1-8 and 33-36 to elicit perceptions as to what way 'Gar thinks of America.' The reasons for massive

emigration, a central concern of this play and *Translations*, are not probed. Why? There is no suggestion, for example, that *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* foreshadows the slow disintegration of Northern Irish society as surely as it comments upon similar aspects of southern Irish society and as surely as Friel's version of Turgenev's novel *Fathers and Sons* interrogates the same sort of relationship between individual and social breakdown and alternatives to these. It is my contention that to ignore Friel's translations and the purpose behind them in relation to his own dramas, is tantamount to studying Spenser's *Faerie Queene* without recognising the implication behind Book V, or without reference to his *A Present View of Ireland*, or reading Milton's *Paradise Lost* without considering his pamphlets on the Commonwealth and his legitimisation of Cromwellian activity in Ireland. It is possible to study the *Faerie Queene* or *Paradise Lost* in isolation only if we are prepared to circumscribe their arguments by ignoring their ideological geography. When Said insists that everything is written from 'somewhere', he calls for a recognition that narratives are the products of a network of relations and affiliations, not simply items of imagination or record. It is valid, therefore, to ask whether present pedagogical investigation favours aspects of Friel's imaginative expression in preference to probing his ideological enquiries. Such reticence perpetuates the creative Celt stereotype promulgated by Spenser, Arnold and others. Bearing in mind Augusta Gregory's Irish Literary Theatre foundation notes, calling upon 'the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation', what does it indicate about contemporary Irish representation when 'standard' English translations are used by the Irish National Theatre in preference to those of Friel or McGuinness, re-written in order to give Irish actors translations that respect their Hiberno English speech and allow them a freedom of theatrical discourse which 'standard' English translations of European classical dramas do not? Does an imperial residue continue to validate Hyde's accusation that the Irish have become a nation of imitators? At an institutional level, it appears so.

Critical response to Friel's translations has been inappropriately hierarchical, failing to explore fully Friel's ironic manipulations. Disdainful of Friel's re-appropriations of high culture, Irish and English critics fail to recognise (or ignore) the aesthetic and political potential of alternative cultural forms. They fail also to examine the specificity of Irish cultural forms, and the active function of aesthetics inherent in Friel's rewritings, encouraging transformation. Failing to examine the 'why and wherefore' of Friel's interventions, they ignore the values which Friel's work re-presents and promotes. Instead, without analysis, Friel is inscribed as an Irish Chekhov and a postcolonial writer. But can we claim his endeavours are aesthetic formulae committed to cultural resistance without addressing how

his works relate to the wider political context? These inter-relations presently remain unexamined in his work so that in some respects it is more productive to ask *who* claims that Friel is a postcolonial writer, who claims him as a traducer in league with the revivalism of Hyde, Corkery and Yeats and who claims he is a republican propagandist. Such claims (perhaps unwittingly) reveal a hunger for definitions and closure, containing a dialectic about language that Friel is determined to keep open to play.

The examination questions set out above suggest that Friel's theatre, with its interrogation of differences and education, has been brought into the canon but is viewed from a specific and, I would suggest, a safe angle of perception, a fate common to the writing of many post-colonial writers. Whether Friel's enquiries will continue to be contained by the canon depends as much upon the students as the teachers since the reader's reception contributes to and modifies and, potentially, transforms any text and its meaning.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that Friel's translations constitute a critique of nationalism, they are not examined. There is the possibility that they will be used as articles of nationalist resistance. Equally, they may well be discounted by purists as inauthentic hybridisations. But beyond these prescriptions there is always the active reader's reception. I have argued that it is more productive to read them as part of an aesthetic *process* of re-territorialisation rather than as a prelude to or guarantee of eventual Irish autonomy.<sup>22</sup> Read in this light, Friel's rewritings will not reiterate the translational aesthetics of Douglas Hyde or the Young Ireland movement, the esoteric prescriptions of Yeats, or the nationalist dictates of Corkery and his followers.

It is ironic that Friel, who interrogates the autonomy of the individual in the private arbitration of values, is hailed in Ireland as a major dramatist, produced by the National Theatre and endorsed by pedagogy, while his translations are passed over by the same theatre and unexamined by tertiary institutions. Such ironies are indicative of the contradiction implicit in bourgeois cultural discourse, involving ideological attempts to bring individual liberty into alignment with association. The contradiction lies in the fact that in Ireland the cultivation of the individual's best self is still conducted, especially in terms of education and employment, under the guidance of an Arnoldian-style authority whose aim it is to bring about an integrated whole, beyond divisions rather than through legitimating differences.<sup>23</sup> The absence of legitimated comparative studies has been explained away by disciplinary purists and yet, as Friel indicates, the need for a more ecumenical understanding of differences depends on a recognition rather than a denial of them.

With *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* Friel suggests that the democratisation of education has followed the track of industrialisation, and with similar effects. Utilitarian education has spread the concept of a common, inherited Irish culture, overriding individual, cultural and class differences, just as industrialisation has overridden the perception of such differences with homogenising images of progress and prosperity. Friel might add that the central ingredient, peace, is missing from these developments and his theatre asks 'why?'

## v conclusion

The rhetoric of compensation practiced by the Revivalists and by successive governments is challenged by Friel. With recurrent dissolves of scene and multiple or shifting perspectives and the sounds of hybridisation, techniques appropriate to a theatre of uncertainty, he contests stereotypical images of the 'lost civilisation', the 'imaginative, thoughtless Celt' and the 'fighting Irish.' His plays demonstrate that such images are the residue of imperial and Revivalist proselytising and encourage instead a reterritorialisation through linguistic and pluralist cultural strategies. Searching not only for 'a sense of life that will make the end less frightening', Friel calls for translation (communication and understanding) and places the weight of self-determinism upon the individual. *Translations*, for example, scrutinises the deterritorialisation effected by colonisation and incarcerating Revivalist myths, inflicted on the national consciousness and on the individual subject by acculturation. Encouraging his constituents to challenge such assimilation, his Hiberno English translations increase not only Irish access to Turgenev and Chekhov but also Irish access to themselves. Friel's aim is to have Irish audiences listen to the insights of Turgenev and Chekhov and apply them to Irish situations and attitudes. However, as Meir Sternberg comments:

each work inherits and establishes a certain range of heterolingual or heterodialectal representation; and it is the interplay of possible and actual, conventional and innovative forms that determines its realistic effect, not the distribution of those forms along some external and eternal scale. ... the variability of literary and communicative contexts forcefully establishes that there is no necessary correspondence between mimetic form and mimetic function.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, there are no guarantees that Irish audiences will welcome or be engaged by Russian characters that sound as though they come from Finner or Tullamore in preference to those from Bloomsbury or elsewhere. Nevertheless, because theatre juxtaposes the verbal and the extralinguistic in an intense and reciprocal relationship, all performances have a transformatory potential. In production, every play involves aural, non-verbal, kinesic elements together with on and off-stage signs within a structure of action, unfolding in time



and space so that the playwright, together with the designer, director and performers, has to be alert not only to what is said but to how and when.

Because of these factors, it is possible to suggest that Friel's *Three Sisters*, which begins on a note of memory but ends with the sisters looking beyond the prevailing circumstances towards the future, may well have been received as a play of hope in the midst of the darkness of the 1980s in Ireland. It is equally possible to claim that six years later, in a climate of violence and despotic authority, Friel's *Fathers and Sons* affirmed the necessity for faith in humanism. Later still, with *A Month in the Country*, Friel critically examined the abuse of authority and individual privilege. The potential for these translations to reach Irish audiences is increased not only by Friel's translation strategies and alterations but also by his sustained reterritorialisation of the Russian works over this ten year period. In addition to their verbal and extralinguistic potential to influence change, the true value of competing translations, Friel's rewritings have influenced his own work, most notably, *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

<sup>1</sup>. Just as Turgenev's Pavel can be interpreted as a criticism of Westernised Russians, so Uncle Peter can be interpreted as a criticism of educated middle class foppery.

<sup>2</sup>. Sean O'Casey. *Three Plays*. New York: St. Martin's Press Macmillan, 1968. 95.

<sup>3</sup>. When the men of Leinster defeated Fergal MacMaile Duin at the battle of Allen they cut off his head and celebrated around it all night. Another head, that of the singer Dunn Bo, also killed in battle, began to sing in praise of Fergal. The praise poems of Dunn Bo, like Friel's plays, ask us to celebrate, not deny, difference. See Peter Berresford. *A Dictionary of Irish Mythology*. London: Constable, 1987. 29.

<sup>4</sup>. Sean O'Casey. *Three More Plays: The Silver Tassie, Purple Dust, Red Roses for Me*. London: Macmillan, New York: St. Martin's, 1965. 287.

<sup>5</sup>. In 1923 O'Casey wrote: 'this is the silent need of the workers: loss of ignorance and acquirement of culture ... [their] greatest need and most urgent claim is a share in the culture of the society of men.' *Feathers from the Green Crow: Sean O'Casey, 1905-1925*. Ed. Robert Hogan. Colombia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1962; London: Macmillan, 1963. 14-15.

<sup>6</sup>. Yeats alters the original chorus's last stasimon to read 'Because this country has a pious mind.' See *Sophocles Oedipus at Colonus* in the *Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats*. London: Macmillan, 1966. 545.

<sup>7</sup>. Founded in 1898, and held its first season in 1899 at the Antient Concert Rooms, Brunswick (now Pearse) Street. Performed Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* and Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field*, promoted by Augusta Gregory, Edward Martyn, George Moore and W.B. Yeats. See *Our Irish Theatre*. London: Putnam, 1913 and *Lady Gregory's Journals 1916-30*. Ed. Lennox Robinson. London: Putnam, 1946.

<sup>8</sup>. In an incisive paper on theatre and insurgency in Ireland, (examining the consensual, distancing manoeuvres and political limitations of institutional theatre), Lionel Pilkington charted the development of cultural nationalism and 'institutional theatre' (i.e. controlled by dominant class interests), embedded in the bourgeois ideology of the Irish Literary Theatre (subsequently the National/Abbey Theatre).. See Lionel Pilkington. "Theatre and Insurgency in Ireland." *Essays in Theatre/Études Théâtrales* 12. 2 (1994): 129-39.

<sup>9</sup>. Seamus Deane, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Joan Fowler and Frank McGuinness. "The Arts and Ideology." *Crane Bag* 9.2. (1985): 64-5.

<sup>10</sup>. Seamus Heaney. *Sweeney Astray* 1983.

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- <sup>11</sup>. Seamus Heaney. *The Cure at Troy, A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes* 1990, repr. 1991.
  - <sup>12</sup>. See Anthony Bradley. "Literature and Culture in the North of Ireland", Christopher Murray. "The History Play Today" and Michael Toolan. "Language and Affective Communication in some Contemporary Irish writers", *Cultural Contexts and Literary Idioms in Contemporary Irish Literature*. Ed. Michael Kenneally. Irish Literary Studies 31. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe (1988): 36-72, 269-289 and 138-153 respectively
  - <sup>13</sup>. Heaney letter to author 1 Dec. 1995.
  - <sup>14</sup>. Seamus Heaney. "Earning a Rhyme." *Poetry Ireland Review* 25 (1989): 95.
  - <sup>15</sup>. *Ibid.* 97 passim.
  - <sup>16</sup>. Mikhail Bakhtin. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Slavic Series No.1. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1981. 292-354 (293).
  - <sup>17</sup>. Bakhtin 1981 294.
  - <sup>18</sup>. Maynooth College. Information to author 18 Apr. 1997.
  - <sup>19</sup>. University College Galway. Information to author 13 Mar. 1997.
  - <sup>20</sup>. University of Ulster. Information to author 18 Mar. 1997.
  - <sup>21</sup>. *Ibid.*
  - <sup>22</sup>. For a summary of Bakhtin's ideas on reterritorialisation, see "Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin" by M.J. Holquist in *Handbook of Russian Literature*. Ed. Victor Teras. Yale UP, 1985. 34-36.
  - <sup>23</sup>. 'Force till right is ready; and till right is ready force, the existing order of things, is justified, is the legitimate ruler' [original emphasis]. Matthew Arnold. "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" 1867. *Essays in Criticism*. London: Macmillan & Co., 1888. 1-41. See also "On the Study of Celtic Literature." *Lectures and Essays in Criticism, Complete Prose Works*. Vol III. Ed. R.H. Super. Canada: Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1965. 291-386.
  - <sup>24</sup>. Meir Sternberg. "Polylingualism and Translation as Mimesis." *Poetics Today* 2:4 (1981): 221-239.

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### Chapter summary

This chapter demonstrates that while *Dancing at Lughnasa* can be read as a free-standing work, effected through metaphor and resurrecting aspects of the traditional *amharclann* (centre for looking), open to *taibhdhearc*<sup>1</sup> (manifestations of the imagination) and associated with the *seanachie* (the traditional Irish storyteller), its verbal patterning and non-verbal language have also been influenced by the poetics of Chekhov. The chapter also examines critics' response to several productions and their inscription of the play as 'Chekhovian'.

### *Dancing at Lughnasa*

In *The Art of Brian Friel*, Elmer Andrews claims that 'Friel's dramatisation of nostalgic memory [in *Dancing at Lughnasa*] owes a good deal to Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* and that 'Chekhov's and Lorca's ghosts are [also] present' in the play (1995. 219-234).<sup>2</sup> *The Glass Menagerie* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* share common themes of familial constraints, individual pain and courage in the face of unfulfilled dreams. Andrews' response may well have been influenced by the fact that when *Dancing at Lughnasa* premièred at the Abbey, the Peacock (downstairs) presented Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, directed by Judy Friel, (the playwright's daughter). But whereas Williams's play is narrated by a character, Tom Wingfield, who actively participates within fictive time, Friel's play uses a narrator in the style of the *seanachie*,<sup>3</sup> or traditional Irish storyteller. In *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Friel's *seanachie* brings images and sensations from his childhood to life with a chorus-like awareness, detached and non-participatory. Friel's method and focus, privileging the power of imagination and memory are, therefore, very different to those of Williams.

The power of memory and imagination celebrated in *Dancing at Lughnasa* is also found in *The Enemy Within* (1962) and in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (1964), using a consciousness of form that is even more exaggerated in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, where the divorce between the narrative and acted segments, and the inversion of the play's 'end', contest realist representation and incline towards non-form. *Dancing at Lughnasa* is a vehicle *amharclann taibhdhearc*, with the narrator, Michael Mundy, as *seanachie*. Re-reading his own tradition and aspects of imagination and memory, Friel requires his audience to recognise their creative energies in their lives. These energies are, in fact, present, differently manifested, in the recurrent dissolves of scenes, the shifting or multiple viewpoints and conflicting commentaries that characterise *The Freedom of the City*, *Living Quarters*, *Aristocrats* and *Faith Healer*. In this sense, *Dancing at Lughnasa* does not, like *The Glass Menagerie*,

reproduce the tension between fantasy and reality; rather, it affirms that language is fluid and the world is both real and imaginary, temporal and atemporal, rational and irrational.

And while Elmer Andrews offers an empathetically explorative study of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, rather than a *Menagerie*-style opposition of fact and fancy, Friel's play conflates these through a critical re-vitalisation of myth and metaphor, encouraging a holistic understanding of life, of inevitable change and uncertainties and of the role of imagination and memory in our understanding of them.

### **i re-reading myth, metaphor and tradition**

Mircea Eliade maintains that myths "fix" paradigmatic models for all rites and all significant activities (eating, sexuality, work and education), encourage particular forms of behaviour and embody ideal goals and judgements of value.<sup>4</sup> The myth at the heart of *Dancing at Lughnasa* concerns the joyous and amorous Celtic god, Lugh.<sup>5</sup> To the ancient Celt he was both ancestor and role model as well as the symbol of fruition and spontaneity. Hence *Dancing at Lughnasa* contests a worldview governed not by nature but by logic and reason. It reveals, for example, that the family, traditionally associated with nurture and growth, can be an arena of tyrannical constraint; it reveals the paradox of a government committed to the revival of Irish folklore, traditional music and dancing but, nevertheless, capable of inhibiting, even repressing, their free expression with legislation such as the Public Dancehalls Act of 1953. Exploring these dynamics, the play examines both the personal and political centres of loyalty and power.

Accordingly, when Elmer Andrews states that dancing is the central image in *Dancing at Lughnasa*, indicating 'a contravention and violation of "normal" reality,' he identifies the very core of the play — repression. And while this is a central concern of Federico Garcia Lorca's play, *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1931), it is only in a superficial manner that *Dancing at Lughnasa* bears a resemblance to it. Both plays explore the impact of political, religious and sexual repression in two families with five sisters, living in small, rural communities where myth, music and dance intermittently threaten the established order. Both plays deal with familial and sexual repression and both are grounded in biographical experience. Robert Lima considers that 'thematically, Garcia Lorca's theatre revolves on a single axis: the preservation of Honour leads to the frustration of love, hence of life, itself; this frustration, in turn becomes a despair which leads to Death' and concludes that this is always the major theme.<sup>6</sup> But although Lorca's preoccupation with chthonic passions has

been compared to Yeats and Synge, definite contrasts exist between their dramatic forms and poetic symbolism and that of Friel, who is familiar with the culture and history of Spain.

In “A Visit to Spain”, an article written in 1952, Friel recalls a stay in Barcelona (headquarters of the Catalan Separatists) and his response to Franco’s Spain, which, like Ireland, had undergone Civil War (1936-39). The article confirms that even as a young man, Friel questioned despotic socio-political constraints and drawing parallels between Spain and Ireland, saw that ‘tradition’ and its paradigms could be used as cousin-germane to ideology in nation-building.

*The House of Bernarda Alba* is set in pre-Civil War Spain, with Lorca’s family controlled by a matriarch. In a similar manner, Friel’s family is governed by the eldest sister, a woman withered by masochistic submission to the dictates of Church and State in post-revolutionary Ireland. *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* both examine power and radical change, moving between moments of stark realistic repression, ritualistic dance and poetic romance. Both plays reveal a human preoccupation with fertility and sacrificial violence. But while there are thematic similarities, a more meaningful point of comparison and influence for Friel’s play is to be found in the Gaelic oral storytelling tradition and the work of Chekhov. In response to its Dublin première, theatre critic and academic Derek West commented that if the play owed ‘something to Chekhov, Friel has triumphantly subsumed the influence into his own creation.’<sup>7</sup> This is the line of argument I adopt in my analysis of the play.<sup>8</sup>

In *Dancing at Lughnasa*, as in Chekhov’s last four plays, plot is subordinated to character, so that attention is focused upon motive, not process. As with many Chekhov characters, Friel’s repressed protagonists frequently fail to actively question their circumstances. Tensions smoulder. When eventually the constraints and social conditions are challenged, no resolution is achieved so that audiences are required to ask why this should be so, and to consider whether these fictional conditions bear any relevance to their lives.

*Dancing at Lughnasa* is another example of how Friel’s theatre confronts our knowledge, our imagination and our understanding of ourselves and others, as well as the paradigms and myths that organise our lives. And while knowledge and understanding do not in themselves necessarily bring about solutions, nonetheless, without them, as Friel indicates, there is little possibility of change.

Several of the play’s themes — the ties that bind the individual to family, faith and fatherland — have been indelibly coloured by historical events. In Ireland, in the wake of the

Famine and intensified by the repressive ideology of the 1930s, definite social patterns emerged: the continuance of emigration, late marriages, repressed sexuality, an increasingly powerful Church and antagonism to cosmopolitan values.<sup>9</sup> Reflections of all these factors are found in Friel's play, making it is a very Irish play. But, with its plot of repressed emotion, *Dancing at Lughnasa* is technically close to the mature drama of Chekhov, where memory, atmosphere and off-stage presences and social conditions are all-powerful. Similarly, in Friel's play the on-stage expression of emotion is suggested through visual images, tableaux, light, verbal echoes, gaps and silences. (Compare, for example, the opening tableaux, garden setting and stage lighting indicated in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*). In addition, Friel gives his narrator a chorus-like awareness in relation to the Mundy family similar, in some respects, to the caustic dynamics established between the Prozorov's reveries and comments by Chebutykin and Solyony. Moreover, *Dancing at Lughnasa* is philosophically close to Chekhov in so far as it offers no sense of release other than the struggle generated by its characters.

Friel's play is set in 1936, in the months when de Valera was drawing up his 'Catholic Constitution for a Catholic people', so that when Maggie Mundy sings, 'Will you vote for de Valera, will you vote?', there is the overt suggestion that the villain of the piece is not a triumphant *arriviste* like Natasha Prozorov nor an idle and privileged individual like Natalya Islayev but the oppressive hand of State and Church, overlaying the vestiges of pre-Christian energies. Equally strong, at the opening and closing of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, there is the suggestion that the nostalgic memories and events of that summer in 1936 have implications for our understanding of ourselves and the divided communities of contemporary Ireland.

*Dancing at Lughnasa* does not reproduce the living world; through myth and metaphor, it renders it visible, both real *and* imaginary. As Richard Kearney states: 'In contradistinction to the orthodox dualist logic of either/or, the Irish mind may be seen to hold a more dialectical logic of both/and: an intellectual ability to hold the traditional oppositions of classical reasoning together in creative confluence.'<sup>10</sup> The world of the play concerns both the festival dance of Lugh *and* the dance of life. Friel evokes these dialectics through the affective memory of Michael Mundy and imaginative spectator response. Hence, the narrator speaks of a world, seen and sensed in the brooding language of metaphor.<sup>11</sup> It is 'not demonstrative, declarative or litigious [but] as Yeats said of Synge, its intent is to add "to our being, not to our knowledge", and what it adds is itself.'<sup>12</sup>

## ii another translation

Through the metaphor of dance, the play juxtaposes two frames of reference, placing the spectator at the intersection of the two perspectives: the harvest dance celebrates the pagan agrarian world, prohibited by Kate, who, as economic head of the Mundy family, represents the ideological world of Church and State. An awareness of these contexts illuminates both. In this sense, Friel's metaphor of dance engages us in translation and offers transformation. Resonant and affective, it attempts to heal the mismatch between desire and socio-sexual roles in the moribund Mundy household. Traditionally the revels of Lughnasa celebrated the cycle of death and resurrection and brought together males and females in a natural fashion, offering to provide both the setting and the means for joyous sexual encounter. Copulation marked Lugh's worship, imitating the sacred union of sun and earth and was, therefore, an act of sympathetic magic that sought to ensure the continuity of life. Pre-Christian and dionysiac, it challenges the staid Catholic values wielded by Kate Mundy.

The dance metaphor presents audiences with frames of reference to be explored, offering insights to be discovered, not by explicit statement but through a highly selective transfer of some of the familiar associations of a word, phrase or gesture. These associations act as a lens through which the isolated lives of the Mundy sisters may be viewed. Recurring words, phrases and gestures grow in associative strength, reminiscent of Chekhov's use of verbal echoes and literary allusions, such as Masha's repeated 'green oak' quotations or the 'love talk' between her and Vershinin. Like the Prozorov's longing for 'Moscow', the Mundy sisters' longing to dance is metonymic of repressed desires. But where Chekhov expresses this in subtle, almost tangential echo phrases and gestures, Friel's expression comes in waves of darkly vigorous movements and frequently repeated phrases.<sup>13</sup> A similar pattern of insistent echoes is also embedded in *Translations* (see Appendix Two) where a network of placenames and associations functions metonymically, indicating a wider condition of deprivation and decay.

## iii the ritual of remembering and re-membering

Dance, joyous and unconditioned, is Friel's metaphor. The women are forbidden to join in the Lughnasa dance but, intermittently, in the confines of their kitchen, they break free in spirited circular dance, signalling physically their sense of incarceration and unfulfilled desire. Pagan circular dances, like present-day European folk dances, signified the concept of equality and inextricable union between the male and female principles.<sup>14</sup> In theatrical terms, the bodies of the women become the locus of oppression, repression and rebellion,



moving to exterior, audible and interior repressed music. Oscillating between constraint and release, the women's brief ecstatic circular dances associatively link up with the off-stage dance of Lugh *and* also the unseen ideological powers, the source of their psychological and physiological containment. These tensions are underscored by the circumscribed kitchen set and contested by the burgeoning harvest that surrounds it.

In terms of setting and props, the family's psycho-physiological containment is underscored by the kitchen set (similar to Friel's use of the hedge school setting in *Translations*). Nevertheless, *Dancing at Lughnasa* gives space and stature to the life of the body — in silent repose, in silenced menial rituals, in maenad-like frenzy, and finally in 'those assuaging notes and those hushed rhythms' (*DL* 71). Friel uses these contrasting states of stasis and affirmation, ritually affecting the human senses to incite analysis of the divergent tensions impacting upon communities and social life moulded by intentions, seen and unseen. *Dancing at Lughnasa* is Friel's freest, freshest celebration of the bridge between the inner and outer worlds of human existence, between consciousness and its absence. With its metaphor of celebratory dance, the play resurrects aspects of the traditional *amharclann taibhdhearc* associated with the *seanachie* but does not illustrate or offer solutions. Michael Mundy, as the *seanachie*, selects images, fragments of memory and imagination. Such images tell of the women's bid for freedom, of his childhood, of a promised bicycle, and reveal the sadness of unfulfilled promises and opportunities. *Dancing at Lughnasa* confirms that life is discontinuity and fragmentation; it confirms the continuance of the very ideological assumptions and constraints it interrogates.

In the oral tradition, stories outline how Lugh, 'the shining one' (an obvious representative of the sun) had defeated Bres, the oppressive leader of the Formors, in order to gain the kingship and preserve the fertility of the land. In the Celtic world, the king, as incarnation of the Solar Lugh, united with the earth mother, incarnated in a beautiful young maiden who symbolised the fecundity of the land. By this union, the king secured the kingship and ensured stability and fertility through and by his goddess-queen mate. La Lughnasa celebrated this union and marked the cyclical climax of the harvest part of the year in Ireland as late as this century.<sup>15</sup>

Festivals such as La Lughnasa formed a bridge between *mythos* and *logos*, and between temporal and spiritual existence.<sup>16</sup> In the context of the play, the Lugh myth illuminates the deficiencies of a *logos*-governed world which it metaphorically interrogates. Friel revives this bridgework to show the deprivation of these 'brave Glenties women' caught in the grip of

De Valera's authoritarian pastoral which peremptorily reduced socio-political and cultural diversity to a single, 'unified' plot (endorsed by Church and State).

La Lughnasa, with its archetypal background of continuity and discontinuity (the cycle of life, birth and renewal reflected in the seasons) was ideally suited to Friel's purpose, analogously examining the self-alienation and ideological disintegration besetting the Mundy family. Yet disparate as it may initially seem, Friel's use of the myth of Lugh to re-read the repressed *mythos* is similar to his use of Chekhov's and Turgenev's explorations of conflict and human suffering in so far as they all form part of his post-colonial critique, re-reading past narratives and influences and the forces of change.

Through the use of the archetypal myth of Lugh and of the metaphor of dance, Friel creates a play dominated by the concepts of growth and constraint. Many of the semiotic properties, such as the 'harvest dance,' 'bilberry picking,' 'Marconi,' and the characters Rose, Jack and Gerry, function as interpretants of others. They form a network of connections, embedded in the text, so that recurring phrases, like 'the back hills' and 'a matter of experience,' can be interpreted literally *and* metonymically. Collectively they form an overlapping pattern of properties which link together, establishing a literal and metaphorical network (as in the oral tradition) but also reminiscent of textual echoes in Chekhov.

Through such semiotics, *Dancing at Lughnasa* explains the paradoxes and sublimated possibilities between the ancient rhythms of La Lughnasa and the authoritarian Catholic code constraining the community of Ballybeg. For subjects caught between these forces - pre-Christianity and Catholicism - gaining a sense of self is virtually impossible. In her first lines, Christina Mundy asks: 'When are we going to get a decent mirror to see ourselves in?'; to which Maggie, her sister, replies, 'You can see enough to do you' (*DL* 1 - 2). On a literal level, the women's presence is fractured and limited as reflected by the household's small, cracked mirror. But here, functioning as a non-verbal index of presence, the mirror shows that the women's positions are unnaturally altered, multiplied, fissured and fragmented.<sup>17</sup>

Fracture and the fragmented body are the dynamics of Irish existence. Hence, *Dancing at Lughnasa* visualises fragments of experience, in another *Bailegangaire*.<sup>18</sup> Such an existence, tortured by a corrosive sense of worthless physicality, needs healing, healing which, Friel suggests, will come through acts of purgation and examination and through individually wrought acts of imaginative transcendence. A movement towards *Dancing at Lughnasa* and the healing it offers is discernible in *Faith Healer* and *Translations*.

Friel's plays share the themes of family, love (sought and generally unfulfilled) freedom and language. But *Dancing at Lughnasa* illustrates these through the body. In no other play has Friel exhibited so clearly an awareness of the female subject's complicity in patriarchal structures and the inevitable 'reward.' Here, however, with its dynamic competing frames of reference, human feeling announces its freedom.

*Dancing at Lughnasa* is ritual theatre, occasioning transformation. On a physical level this is signalled by the harvest, ripe for gathering, and the dance which celebrates not only fruition but also the body's dance of self-exploration. All three aspects merge, become synonymous and signify the process of coming to be, not just the feeding of physical drives. This metaphoric dance is intimately wedded to nostalgia — the pain and hopes of the Mundy family, and the pain of the child, Michael, remembering and re-membered, moving from innocence to experience: 'I had', he tells us, 'a sense of unease, some awareness of a widening breach between what seemed to be and what was' (DL 2).

As narrator, Michael is an amalgam of aspects of many Friel characters: Private and Public Gareth O'Donnell in *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, the whimsical rhapsodists Trilby and Ingram in *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (1966), the shadowy narrators in *Winners* (1967), Sir in *The Aristocrats* (1979) and Frank Hardy in *Faith Healer* (1979). But more than any of them Michael is a reinstantiation of the time and place occupied by the traditional *seanachie*. Like the traditional storyteller, he inhabits spectators' space, easily and quietly, introducing them to his memories of his mother, father and aunts who people the play. This reversal of dramatic conventions underlines the new aesthetic space Friel is opening up and simultaneously underlines the *unreality* presented in reverie. This does not, however, diminish the interrogation or the implications of the play. The very manner of presentation (the narrator hailing the dramatic episodes) allows ordinariness (identifiably the stuff of human existence) to become numinous. Ordinary events like preparing and cooking a meal, domestic ceremonials that are both enabling and incarcerating, assume ritual status.

#### iv a theatre *amharclann taibhdhearc*

More than in any of his previous plays Friel establishes in *Dancing at Lughnasa* a dialogue between conscious and unconscious dynamics through a concert of innumerable voices, some ecstatic and fierce (as in the women's first dances), some rendered visible by silenced bodies (like Christina's ironing, Maggie's baking and Agnes' and Rose's endless knitting) or of silent rapture (as illustrated by the final dance of Christina and Gerry Evans). These several wordless, metaphoric orchestrations of desire and lack require our interpretative

effort and attention because they are multivocal and complex. At their paradoxical simplest these orchestrations visually express sorrow and joy. At their most complex, as the voice of pre-historic subjectivity, they express an abundance of things, of fantasies and tangible reality. This constructivist or layered approach is indicative of Friel's persistent interrogation of the creative forces affecting and effecting existence. This is a memory play — Michael, the 'creator,' renders things visible and invisible, seen and sensed. The play of meaning resonates between these related extremes.

In *Dancing at Lughnasa* mundane activity repeatedly gives way to reverie and remembrance redolent of the reminiscences of Chekhov's characters. But through 'consoling fictions' Friel's play examines both pre- and post-colonial Ireland. If the Russian rewritings provided him with a distance through which he could analogously explore the forces of change and repression, these same forces are explored in *Dancing at Lughnasa* — through myth and metaphor, pagan, Christian and 'Ryangan.' More than any play to date, *Dancing at Lughnasa* reveals images of deep alienation through bodies that dare to dance. The bodies of the Mundy women are the locus of institutional constraints and it is through such bodies that Friel makes his clearest and most insistent statement to date about socio-political developments in Ireland and the individual's power to contest institutional repression.

#### v a poetics of fracture

Friel's new language of the emotions was influenced, even heightened, by his close and empathetic re-working of the Russian texts, and especially of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. There, the interpersonal is displaced by intrapersonal crises, signalled through gaps, silences and echoes of apparently tangential words or phrases, by music and by 'indirect action.'<sup>19</sup> The desire of Chekhov's characters to make sense of their lives turns inward-looking as they become aware 'of their own inadequacy and impotence' (Williams 1987 107). The desire for liberation and a sense of exhausted consciousness is a dynamic common to many Friel characters and a dynamic present in the plays considered here.

Like Turgenev and Chekhov, Friel examines the dangers of self-estrangement, of owning and practising conflicting values and emotions, and reveals how personal crises are influenced by extrapersonal socio-politico-economic factors. In *Dancing at Lughnasa* such factors exercise invisible and debilitating paradigmatic powers of repression. Nevertheless, Friel's focus is the autonomy of the individual in the private arbitration of values, refusing to give way to overwhelming conditions and paradigms — no matter how powerful. And in this sense *Dancing at Lughnasa*, like Friel's translations, is a play about redemptive struggle and

hope. It recuperates aspects of the Gaelic oral tradition and subsumes aspects from the poetics of Chekhov.

As I have shown, the plays of Turgenev, Chekhov and Friel use music, movement and gesture to make visible the unspoken and unrealised rhythms of life and, through their various orchestrations prompt us to ask why this should be so. Throughout Friel's Russian plays, music is used not only to create ambience but also, more importantly, to express characters' inability to critically interrogate their conditions or articulate their feelings. This inability is related to the structures and paradigms that shape their lives. But if Friel has gleaned this facility to speak through music *and* silence from Chekhov (perhaps back in the early sixties when he watched Tyrone Guthrie directing the *Three Sisters* in Minneapolis) then he develops his own most dynamic and independent orchestration of it in *Dancing at Lughnasa*. There, music, movement and memory make visible the whole thesis of the play, the return of the repressed and the failure of self-location.

The traditional Irish tunes in *Dancing at Lughnasa* may be interpreted initially as nostalgic. But, once remembered, their battering rhythms enter and animate the women's bodies, and it is clear this music is subversive, contesting the code of silence. Joyously liberating and exuberant, these rhythms challenge the controlling paradigms of Church and State — redemptive sacrifice and unconditional loyalty to the notion of a unified culture. Traditional Irish dance music bound the individual body with its strictly prescribed form but invited the dancer to innovate within and against it. Friel uses these dynamics so that in the play, the ancient tradition surges through the women, rupturing the overlay of prescribed 'Christian' behaviour. Ironically, the popular songs that scandalise Kate, repeatedly urging that 'anything goes' and announcing exotic places as various as Capri and Abyssinia, pale when compared with the traditional (wordless) Irish rhythms and the raw, unconditioned energies they remember and release. This is the celebratory recognition and aesthetic independence Friel nudges his audiences towards, underlining the multivalent nature of experience denied in Ballybeg.

*Dancing at Lughnasa*, I believe, offers a poetics of fracture. And although it is told through language, because it is wrought through memory and imagination, the world of the play is made visible by a language other than words — music and dance. With this play and his *Three Sisters*, we can see the degree to which the legacy of Chekhov has enriched Friel's use of memory and music. Chekhov frequently uses music and repeated rhythmic phrases to articulate and focus attention upon the gap between words and meaning, between the stated and unspoken emotions, the rhythm of life snapping like a twig or guitar string. In *Dancing*

at *Lughnasa* Friel uses music and phrasing in the same manner but more blatant, less subtle, moving through the human body and underlining the tragic circumstances of his Mundy family and the critique they represent.

#### vi critical response

The Mundy sisters, as their name suggests, represent the impoverished of the world. Nevertheless, four of the sisters are not wholly accepting of Kate and her dictates. What remains to be seen is whether future productions will retain the engrained poverty and injustice made visible by the play, or whether, like *Translations* before it, *Dancing at Lughnasa* will be assimilated into the canonical repertoire and domesticated. Clearly, this depends upon the integrity of directors, designers and actors as much as it does upon audiences and journalistic and academic responses and influences. The shift in certain actors' interpretations and specific items of costuming between the initial Dublin performance and the two subsequent London productions (also by the Abbey and directed by Patrick Mason) does not augur well.

Among the critical acclaim awarded the Dublin première, David Grant identified and praised the play's 'superb set of rugged and carefully detailed performances,' stating that these 'ensure that we are given a very direct and uncompromising picture of the people and ideas that give substance to Friel's play.'<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein, Matt Wolf, the London-based critic for the *New York Times*, succinctly encapsulated Mason's direction of Friel's play, saying that it showed the Mundy sisters were 'tied by poverty, lack of education and opportunity to a subsistence level in their tiny cottage.'<sup>21</sup> Whereas the setting, performances and costumes of this (Abbey) production remained almost intact when transferred (in October 1990) to the Lyttelton (in association with the National Theatre), subsequently, several actors and some items of costume (especially footwear) changed in the Garrick production (in April 1992).<sup>22</sup> Commenting on Mason's (Abbey) production at the National, John Lahr had described the Mundy sisters' existence as a 'threadbare, blinkered, suffocated, lovelorn plight'<sup>23</sup> However, in the Garrick's 1992 (Abbey) production, this hardship was softened by items of costume (such as new Wellingtons and shoes) which contradicted the play's detailed circumstances and critique (noted by Grant and Lahr). As a result, the 'heightened ordinariness,' 'ritual precision' and the hardship which Richard Pine found in Mason's 1990 production were lost.<sup>24</sup> In the interim, the production had opened at the Phoenix Theatre (March 1991) and The Plymouth Theatre (October 1991). Long and assured reviews by Julie Kavanagh (writing for *Vanity Fair*) and Mel Gussow (drama critic for the *New York Times*)

confirm the spectrum of American attention captured by the play<sup>25</sup> so that, according to Robert Brustein, it ‘settled on Broadway after unanimously positive notices from exuberant reviewers.’<sup>26</sup> It is interesting that, in varying ways, Matt Wolf, Julie Kavanagh, Helen Rose, Robert Brustein together with critics writing in Ireland (such as Richard Pine, David Grant and Derek West<sup>27</sup>) recognised the play’s unwavering critique of poverty and repression, and described the play as having subsumed ‘Chekhovian’ elements. In addition, while some aligned Friel’s use of memory with Shaw’s, all of these critics recognised and commented in some detail that the set was symbolic rather than realistic.

In New Zealand, Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland productions offered markedly different interpretations of the text (not a fault in itself) but, played within sets that failed to respond to the significance indicated in the text, they interpreted the play more as an Irish romp in the Boucicault tradition than as a work fundamentally critical of socio-political attitudes and conditions in contemporary Ireland. This critique was present in Bill Haycock’s production for the Queensland Theatre Company, according to the critic for the *Australian Financial Review*. Mary Nemeth commented that Irish actor Maeliosa Stafford, in a subtle and flawless performance, confided rather than narrated the play’s critique and that once caught in his ‘channel of recollection ... the audience are drawn ... into the highly charged experience of race memory where we recognise ... the essential flimsiness and invalidity of the barrier between restrictive “civilised” mores and our heart’s desire for greater freedom in the dance.’<sup>28</sup> The function and performance of the narrator in the Christchurch production by the Court Theatre were reviewed much less favourably. The critic found that the ‘over-long segments of narration ... and the direction [by Susan Curnow] render[ed] the end of the play appallingly sentimental.’<sup>29</sup> Different again, the Downstage production [directed by George Webby] and the narrator’s performance were judged as ‘unsentimental’ by reviewer Laurie Atkinson, who concluded that ‘there is a gentle melancholic tone to the play and poignancy and pain in the harsh, wasted lives of the sisters.’<sup>30</sup> Perhaps taking their lead from director Sarah Peirse, both Linda Herrick and Bernadette Rae suggested that the Auckland Herald Theatre production was ‘Chekhovian’ but without any indication of what this term meant to them or how it might relate to Friel’s play.<sup>31</sup> Peirse herself said that ‘*Dancing at Lughnasa* is very Chekhovian. It is about being and becoming, about people’s lives growing and disintegrating [and that it was] also moving, funny and sharp.’<sup>32</sup> Peter Hawes, reviewing the Centrepoint Theatre’s production, described the play as, ‘quite extraordinary, five sisters, a whisky priest and a lover emote, in the best traditions of *Seinfeld*, over almost nothing while we watch the sky fall in. *Lughnasa* plays rather as *The Cherry Orchard* would if the cast

didn't hear the chopping.<sup>33</sup> Hawes commented that 'human endeavour has bugger all to do with fate', that 'these ordinary little people are suddenly suffused with the grandeur of impending tragedy' and concluded that 'the intimations of Chekhov are not coincidental – Friel, it seems, has translated *Three Sisters*.' Hawes' uninformed remarks were echoed by the comments of Martin Bate, John Ross<sup>34</sup>, Lou Tulett<sup>35</sup> and Judith Paviell.<sup>36</sup> Ross, Tulett and Paviell merely offered a rough synopsis of the play and praised the use of fresh grass in the set design while Bate stated that 'totally credible, this play has been described as a classic.'<sup>37</sup>

As can be seen from the above, New Zealand critics (perhaps echoing earlier academic enthusiasms<sup>38</sup>) apparently felt free to describe *Dancing at Lughnasa* as 'Chekhovian' but (unlike Lahr and West) did so without explaining the significance of such a term or their use of it so that ultimately their response to and inscription of the play and the playwright constitute a disservice.

*Dancing at Lughnasa* can, with justification, be compared to the mature drama of Chekhov in so far as it illustrates the fracture and fallibility of characters ensnared by a logic of ideological constraints, by powerful paradigms and, ultimately, lifelong frustration. But the play's method, the rupture of dance, deliberately unsubtle, makes *Dancing at Lughnasa* wholly Irish, since at its core traditional Irish rhythms wordlessly speak these women's colonisation and rebellion, demonstrating that while language affects behaviour, it can be challenged. And while Friel's music is very different to that of Chekhov (such as the hermetic humming duet of Masha and Vershinin), nevertheless both playwrights use music (literal and figurative) to articulate repressed emotion. Where Chekhov's music is subtle, Friel's is vigorous but both express fragmentation and a desire to connect.

And, paradoxically, because *Dancing at Lughnasa* is wholly Irish, it is also a tragic play, unable to escape its own destructive paradigms; a pious people, steeped in redemptive sacrifice and unconditional loyalty, they are separated from the celebratory dance of life. Dancing expresses a desire to integrate. The Mundy women, similar to Friel's Prozorovs, are denied this opportunity and, consequently, they are divided in themselves, fragmented, and separated from a celebration that engenders community. Hence the languages of this play (movement, music, memory and silence) constantly move outside ideological constraints and logic into a kind of frenzy, exemplifying how vigorously Friel brings the personal and political into unquiet consonance, a poetics of fracture yet also of possible change. Dancing potentially offers connection; it is Friel's metaphor for celebration, central to life and community: 'the way to speak, to whisper private and sacred things, to be in touch with otherness.'



- <sup>1</sup>. *Amarc* - look; *lann* - a centre for the activity in question, e.g. *leabhar* - a book; *Leabharlann* - a library, so *amharclann* - a theatre or playhouse. *Taibh* - a root of various words implying dream, imagination, ghosts, revelation, manifestation. *-dhearc* - from *dearc* (aspirated in its composite form) meaning look, behold, regard, consider, so *taibhdhearc* - a place where people behold or present things of the imagination.
- <sup>2</sup>. This opinion was also voiced by Robert Brustein. "The dreaming of the bones." *Theatre Ireland* 29. 1991: 49-51; John Lahr. 'Dancing Days' *UK Vogue* Oct. 1990; Helen Rose. 'Dancing at Lughnasa' *Plays and Players* Dec. 1990: 13; Matt Wolf. 'A Five-Sister Play, a "Family" of Actors' *New York Times* 20 Oct. 1991 and Gus Mellow. 'From Ballybeg to Broadway' *New York Times Magazine* 29 Sep. 1992.
- <sup>3</sup>. Traditional Irish storyteller, distantly related to the *fillè*, Druid praise poets. See Douglas Sealy, "A New Voice for the Seanachie." *The Irish Times* 8 Dec. 1990.
- <sup>4</sup>. Myths both form and sanction the moral norms of a society. Understood in this way, myths offer ways of ordering experience and patterns for human action and ritual re-enactment. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*. Trans. W. Trask. London: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1959, Chapter 2.
- <sup>5</sup>. As leader of the *Tuatha de Danaan*, Lugh (known as 'Samhildánach', meaning, 'the one who possesses all the arts'), as archetypal mate ensuring continuance of the tribe, also symbolises a patron for Friel's female characters. The fullest description of Lugh can be found in the eleventh century Irish text *Cath Maige Tuired* ('the Battle of Moytirra'). Daith O hOgain. *Myth, Legend and Romance, An Encyclopaedia of the Irish Folk Tradition*. Dublin: Ryan Publications, 1990. 272-278.
- <sup>6</sup>. Robert Lima. *The Theatre of Garcia Lorca*. New York: Colombia UP, 1963. 291.
- <sup>7</sup>. Derek West. "Dancing at Lughnasa." *Theatre Ireland*. Spring 1990: 11.
- <sup>8</sup>. C. Fusco. "The Dancer or the Dance? A critical analysis of Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*" in *Études Irlandaises*. 21-1. 1996: 109-126.
- <sup>9</sup>. See: Terence Brown 1990 159. and Seamus Deane "Mary Lavin." *The Irish Short Story*. Eds. Patrick Raffordy and Terence Brown. Lille: Publications de l'Université de Lille III, 1979. 244.
- <sup>10</sup>. Richard Kearney. ed. *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985. 9.
- <sup>11</sup>. If interpreted literally, metaphor is absurd since the two contexts are widely disparate but, nonetheless, there are significant analogies between the things metaphorically compared. Metaphor intentionally conflates boundaries and resists explanation or replacement by a set of literal equivalences. And although there is a flagrant crossing of type-boundaries, metaphor is not a mere pretence. The act of comparison and possible extension is left to the reader or spectator to explore and, because of this open-endedness, metaphor is potentially without limits.
- <sup>12</sup>. D.E.S. Maxwell, "Semantic Scruples: A Rhetoric of Poetry." *Literature and the Changing Ireland*, Irish Literary Studies 9. Ed. Peter Connolly. Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1982. 157-174.
- <sup>13</sup>. References to the competing worlds of the 'dance' (and its ritual location, 'the back hills') and 'Christian' proprieties are spread throughout the text: dance occurs (*DL* 1, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 20, 21, 22, 32, 33, 34, 36, 42, 50, 64, 65, 66 and 67); 'the back hills,' occurs (*DL* 5, 16, 17, 28, 35, 55, 59 and 61). 'Christian' proprieties occurs (*DL* 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 23, 24, 33, 34, 35, 41, 47, 52, 58, 59, 63, 66, 68, 69 and 70).
- <sup>14</sup>. See Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion*, New York: Atheneum, 1984. 121.
- <sup>15</sup>. Máire MacNeill. *Conhairle Bhéalloideas Éireann*. Dublin: University College Dublin, 1982.
- <sup>16</sup>. Here *mythos* refers to traditional stories (such as that of Lugh) and explanations or truths (such as embodied in the cycle of the seasons or observations on human behaviour) held and believed by the populous, pre-philosophical and pre-rational but with their own independent structure and intelligence. *Logos* (meaning rational knowledge) is juxtaposed with *mythos*, not in opposition but more in terms of a balance of contraries, each potentially providing a sort of bridging between the different ways of knowing

- <sup>17</sup>. A broken mirror is a recurring motif in Irish literature. Friel's use of it elaborates Seamus Heaney's metaphoric use of it in a fictional encounter with Joyce, in 'Station Island.' Seamus Heaney. *Station Island*, 1985. 27-8. In the work of Friel and Heaney, the broken mirror symbolises distortion but it also allows signals the end of reflective-mimesis and encourages reflective-speculation.
- <sup>18</sup>. As in Tom Murphy's play of that name which translates as 'the town without laughter.'
- <sup>19</sup>. Magarshack's term for the powerful off-stage occurrences and 'invisible' characters in Chekhov. See Magarshack. "Part iv: Plays of Indirect Action." 1960.159-288, esp.163; 173.
- <sup>20</sup>. David Grant. *Theatre Ireland*. Spring 1990: 9-11.
- <sup>21</sup>. Matt Wolf. *New York Times*. 20 Oct. 1991. 5; 11.
- <sup>22</sup>. See review by Helen Rose. *Plays and Players*. Dec. 1990. 31.
- <sup>23</sup>. See: John Lahr. 'Dancing Days.' *UK. Vogue*. Oct. 1990. 86, and David Grant. *Theatre Ireland*. Spring 1990: 7-11.
- <sup>24</sup>. Richard Pine. *Theatre Ireland*. Spring 1990: 7-9.
- <sup>25</sup>. See: Julie Kavanagh. *Vanity Fair*. October 1991. 48-53, and Gus Mellow. *New York Times Magazine*. 29 Sep. 1991. 30-34.
- <sup>26</sup>. Robert Brustein. *Theatre Ireland*. Autumn. 1991: 49-51.
- <sup>27</sup>. Derek West. *Theatre Ireland*. Spring 1990: 11.
- <sup>28</sup>. Mary Nemeth. 'Pain, Passion and Paganism.' *Australian Financial Review* 6 May 1994. 14. See also Martin Daly's 'Listening at Lughnasa.' *The Age* 23 Dec. 1992.
- <sup>29</sup>. Isabelle Teresa. 'Court Theatre present *Dancing at Lughnasa*.' Christchurch Press 13 Jun. 1994.
- <sup>30</sup>. Laurie Atkinson. *The Dominion* 13 Jun. 1994.
- <sup>31</sup>. Bernadette Rae. *New Zealand Herald* 19 Jul. 1995; Linda Herrick. *Sunday Star Times* 16 Jul. 1995. See also: Susan Budd. *The Dominion* 13 Jun. 1994.
- <sup>32</sup>. Rae. *New Zealand Herald* 19 Jul. 1995.
- <sup>33</sup>. Peter Hawes. *Theatre Review* Aug. 1998.
- <sup>34</sup>. John Ross. *Dominion* 18 Jun. 1998.
- <sup>35</sup>. Lou Tulett. *Theatre Review Tribune* 21 Jun. 1998. Similar under-reading occurs in: MD. 'Dancing at Lughnasa – a fine Irish tale.' *DisInformation* Jul. 1998 and Jon Hoyle's interview with Emma Kinane, 'Old addiction revisited.' *Guardian* 11 Jun. 1998.
- <sup>36</sup>. Judith Paviell. *Evening Standard* 15 Jun. 1998.
- <sup>37</sup>. Martin Bate. *Guardian* 18 Jun. 1998.
- <sup>38</sup>. Michael Coveney *Financial Times* 10 Sep. 1981; Michael Sheridan. *Irish Press*. 10 Sep. 1981 and Richard York. "Brian Friel: Centre and Periphery." *The Internationalism of Irish Literature and Drama*. Ed. By Joseph McMinn with the assistance of Anne McMaster and Angela Welch. Irish Literary Studies 41. Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1992: 154-161.

**Chapter VIII Conclusion — Language and the Possibilities of Change**

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## Chapter summary

This chapter, in summing up, looks at language in Ireland and Friel's critique of its frequent failure to accommodate or reflect the experience of difference. Previous chapters have considered how specific plays interrogate and counter this malaise, promoting the process of aesthetic decolonisation and invoking the concept of translation as one way of creating revivifying change beyond the confines of the stage. The recurring question Friel poses is whether or not differences can be acknowledged and accommodated.

### i language and reality?

Wittgenstein's statement that he 'used to think that there was a direct link between language and Reality', underlines the twentieth century crisis of language and the fractured reality of self.<sup>1</sup> The lie of language as singular and fixed, and a sense of fracture in self and life, together with the possibilities of renewal, are key concepts in the drama of Brian Friel and several of his predecessors.

Language is our central mode of creating meaning and understanding. The problem is that in Ireland it has frequently failed to accommodate or reflect experience. The language of Friel's theatre constantly scrutinises the concept of 'modernity', a concept like that of 'progress', in so far as it produces its own conditions of being. With modernity, you also have tradition, backwardness and development, a whole lexicon of the political and the social that pretends to analysis when it is merely establishing its own credentials. This is the quandary encapsulated in the quotations from Ricoeur and Deane prefacing chapter II: how to become modern and yet retain contact with the past. This is the philosophical focus of *Translations* and its caricatured *riposte*, *The Communication Cord*, both of which, at the last, call for a re-examination of the concept and discourse of 'nation' by dramatising some of the contradictions and assumptions inherent in the process of modernisation and most fully explored in *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

In Ireland, both politics and theatre have long been criticised in terms of, and incarcerated within recurring paradigms. What is intriguing, however, is the construction of the climate that sustains such paradigms, and how and why they remain so effective. In Ireland, as elsewhere, the roles of institutional education and representation, inflected by the prevailing politics, have been and remain central to a sense of self. But if politics is the technique of preserving the coherence and welfare of the community, and if art facilitates the expanding of individual perception, then it is not difficult to forecast a confrontation between the two. This

need not, as Friel insists, be a battle between the polemics of centre and periphery but more in the nature of an ongoing dialectic.

Quietly subversive of prescriptions and fixed polarities, Friel's tragicomic theatre employs irony and humour to open up critical space, to examine established paradigms and possibilities of change. Involving audiences in enquiry, he encourages a dis-identification with exclusivity *or* with the symmetry inherent in the sort of counter-determination that colours many supposedly post-colonial situations. Relations of love and loyalties are scrutinised (often through the arenas of family and education) for their capacity to help nurture self-location, and a sense of self and others. Hence, the degree to which contemporary critics misread or under-read Friel suggests that the power of certain politically inflected paradigms remains dominant.

## ii understanding differences

The endless task of re-reading the link between language and reality is the self-imposed task of writers such as Friel and Heaney who, like Wittgenstein, acknowledge their loss of 'innocence' but recognise the possibilities of change and the need to forge a new language (of translation) that *can* affect living realities. Each pursues this in a different but related fashion. Heaney and Friel have been criticised for publishing their aesthetics in English and for not making more overtly political statements. But such prescriptive complaints are as narrow as the canonical criteria of scholars and translators who, proficient in both source and target languages, insist upon notions of fixed categories or literal equivalence. Such prescriptions privilege notions of essence and fidelity, sacrificing the value of communicative function in favour of form (something perceived as ideal and therefore fixed and unalterable), and ignore the fact that most people who read a translation do so because they cannot read the source language. Re-reading, as Friel demonstrates with his translations, must aim at understanding differences rather than anticipating fixity, since language rarely matches the contours of 'fact'.

As stated at the outset of this thesis, Ireland, as a European country with a colonial past, and the experience of a radical language-shift, does not fit easily into reductive categories or prescriptions. With a minority language, Irish, and a majority language, English, contemporary Ireland has experience of *both* sides of the translation equation in that the *majority* language in Ireland, *Hiberno English*, exists in a *minority position* in the English-speaking world. The language of that world, standard English, may, as Stephen Dedalus tells us, sound *familiar* but in Ireland it remains *foreign*. But the degree to which the alienation

inherent in language (by its very multiplicity) is recognised, remains a moot point. This condition of extraterritoriality is written large in the work of Joyce and Beckett, Friel and Heaney, demonstrating that constant internal translation occurs not only between two language systems but also between words and meaning. Such a practice involves scrutiny and selection and this can only occur through dialectic from which Ireland may emerge re-defined. This is, Friel indicates, one of the possibilities of language — translation.

The recurring question Friel poses is whether or not differences can be acknowledged and accommodated. Through re-membering can 'Ireland' be performed differently? He suggests that more vital than any exclusive ideology, whether forging a united Ireland or preserving the geography of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, is the ability to embrace change and differences. Such considerations, calling for an equitable and just society within the inevitability called 'modernisation', do not have to be costumed in Orange or Green. They are represented in the characters of Turgenev and Chekhov as often as they are in those of Friel.

### iii 'the burden of the incommunicable' (Friel)

Friel suggests that an understanding of our own fundamental alienation, reflected in language, may be the only way of approaching 'the burden of the incommunicable', our own and that of others.<sup>2</sup> In Friel, as in Turgenev and Chekhov, communication is gapped, often non-sequential and repetitive, and characters' attitudes and their philosophical underpinnings are revealed through but not distracted by social and political questions of identity and culture. Frequently, characters appear to be isolated from one another. This is the reality of Ireland. And though the past and its paradigms are seen to intrude upon the individual, Friel's focus is personal relationships and responses to these pressures, and individuals' strategies for change. Thus the burden of responsibility and intrepid trust is placed in the hands of his audiences. Like Chekhov's, Friel's plays are not designed to provide a realistic description of people, their occupations or classes, but to enquire into what individuals *feel* in terms of emotional and moral dilemmas, and *why*. As I have argued, such enquiries are not confined to or answered by the performances on stage; rather they mediate between audience response and their relationship with the wider socio-political context. This is the unquiet but positive energy of Friel's theatre, constantly enquiring into the interrelations of culture and consciousness, history, politics, performance and reception — of differences.

Relationships (and how they are forged) are Friel's focus, and understanding or its absence is his talisman. Relationships and understanding entail a recognition of life's totality

and contradictions. Friel shows that excessive self-analysis, as in his Hamletesque faith healer, Frank Hardy, or in his Bazarov, can cripple or inhibit an individual's ability to respond to life; spontaneity can be paralysed, creating a spiritual malaise. But equally Friel shows that an absence of sustained critical enquiry into the self and others, as in the O'Donnell brothers, Owen and Manus, the Mundy sisters, or in his Prozorov sisters, Anna Odintsov or Natalya Islayev can also be lethal.

Critically examining his own mediational influence, Friel burdens his faith healer, Frank Hardy, with the 'truth', the paradoxical power of language. Frank Hardy asks: 'Was it all chance? - or skill? or illusion? - or delusion? Precisely what power did I possess? Could I summon it? When and How? Was I its servant? Did it reside in my ability to invest someone with faith in me or did I evoke from him a healing faith in himself? Could my healing be effected without faith?' (*FH* 334). If Hardy is destroyed by his questioning of the primitive, with its celebration of vital individuality, then the Mundy sisters, eager to embrace it, are oppressed by its institutional opposite, Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> *Faith Healer* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* are plays that validate and make visible pre-Christian energies silenced by the Catholic church, showing the power of doctrine to bind the sensate body and further fracture 'reason.' In these plays, as in Friel's translations, characters oscillate between unquestioning respect for tradition and vital individuality. Ultimately their dilemmas demonstrate that emotional intelligence and intellectual enquiry are not mutually exclusive. Such dilemmas do not in themselves make life odious; rather, conflict arises in the imbalance between heart and head, in the gulf between individuals and the unchallenged images of a unified culture and creed. Such a culture and creed (whether Green or Orange) presented as spiritually liberating and superior, even sacred, is a formidable crusader in the face of modernisation and secularisation. But, Friel asks, can such an enterprise embrace relationships of difference? What mechanisms, he asks, does it employ to balance and check the material and social effects of modernisation while also providing for different productions of the imagination and mind?

In *Faith Healer* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* the illusion of freedom in a benevolent faith and fealty, the hunger for progress and to belong, are shown to be the products of an institutional and homogenising culture. They are as illusory as characters' opportunities for self-determination. Focusing upon memory and the body, these plays confirm a developmental shift in Friel's work towards resurrecting a theatre *amharclann taibhdhearc*. *Faith Healer* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* examine the processes of aesthetic and social formations from within the structures of language as fixed while affirming a belief in the

transfigurative imagination, beyond intellectual assimilation. But, like *The Gentle Island* and *Translations*, these are also dark plays. At their core exist ‘maddening questions’ (*FH* 337) and, at best, the admission that ‘confusion is not an ignoble condition’ (*T* 446), so that consciousness and conditions are seen to be socially and politically constructed processes of formation. Such processes require *translation*. Thus the nature of Friel’s dramas underlines the necessity for connection between vital individuality and self-determining, revivifying change. Such dramas dismantle the language of theatre as literary artefact and call for dialogue between the individual and formative cultural structures. This is what Friel intimates when he talks about finding ‘our own voice’, ‘talking to ourselves’, and decolonising the mind. If in turn we can legitimate this dialogue, this type of critical theatre, then as critics we can examine and estimate his translations, their theatrical communicative efficiency and their affect on audiences as acts of cultural confidence. Their testing ground is performance.

#### iv new space, shifting and uncertain

This thesis began by asking ‘what is translation?’ and ‘for whom does it exist?.’ It considered aspects of translation theory and practice, and found that orthodox dictates were inappropriate to a reading of Friel’s translations. Examining his intention and strategies, it has argued for an understanding of Friel’s translations as mediational narratives — ‘stepping stones to the other side’ — new, critical aesthetic space, shifting, uncertain and various but open-minded and prepared to dialogue with what is not itself — with its other.

As Friel is indebted to the theoretical work of George Steiner, so I am indebted to the new theoretical space opened up by Susan Bassnett-McGuire and others and the specifically Irish contribution to translation recuperated by Michael Cronin. Bassnett-McGuire’s perspective that ‘translation is a *rewriting* of an original text’ and that rewritings can ‘introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices’, has offered a relevant and productive framework through which to interpret Friel’s translations. Using this, it has been possible to argue that Friel’s rewritings continue the resonant presence of translation in Ireland, within the wider historical context of literary innovation. As Michael Cronin suggests, this is one way of opening up the languages and literatures of Ireland to the literatures and cultural experiences of other peoples, in reciprocity. By focusing upon what happens in the contact zone between languages, and particularly translators’ strategies, and examining how translation affects both the development of language and ‘reality’ and the construction of identity, we move towards creating the physical, intellectual and moral ‘equipment for living.’



Cronin argues that translation practice in Ireland has long been productive and highly independent. His re-evaluation of historical precedents augurs well for the innovative and pragmatic strategies of writers like Friel, recognising that translation in Ireland has traditionally functioned as a weapon of political propaganda, an agent of linguistic reform, and a catalyst for cultural change and renewal. Friel's rewritings are manipulations, renewing the enquiries of Russian works in close relation to Irish audiences and their conditions. They are translations as hermeneutical resources and a way of coping with the uncertainties of change. This self-imposed task was enabled and enriched, as Friel states, by his great affection for Turgenev and Chekhov but perhaps more importantly by their considerations, since he recognises that, in their time, Turgenev and Chekhov opened up new aesthetic space and implicitly facilitated cultural re-visioning.

*A Month in the Country* was before its time and moved haltingly across unmapped territory. But it established the necessary environment in which Chekhov could blossom. And once the full stature of Chekhov's mature plays was recognised, the environment was again ready for the reclamation, reassessment and full understanding of Turgenev's pioneering work. As Friel comments, they gave life to each other and changed the face of European drama.<sup>4</sup>

Friel's remarks illustrate two points of my argument and suggest a third. The first is that Friel's perspective on and understanding of the energies which we call 'theatre', are comprehensive, translatory and dialectic. He understands that the arc of communication between writer, play, performers, technicians and audiences forms a process, a series of translations open to constant re-visioning. The second and related point is not only that Friel appreciates and understands the groundbreaking space opened up by Turgenev and consolidated by Chekhov, but also that his own work perpetuates 'the richly metabiotic relationship between them' and their enquiries into forces of change.<sup>5</sup> Through their explorations, as Friel comments, European theatre grew up out of an arena of melodrama and realism, and towards a theatre of psychological investigation, sceptical of its primary means of communication — language. The third point, central to my argument, is that the creation of new aesthetic space of enquiry and self-reference, which Friel attributes to Turgenev and Chekhov, can be claimed for his manipulations of their work. And while these rewritings are not politically overdetermined, it is a fact that language is acquired within a political context and that Friel's translations decolonise and rewrite that context. The possibilities he encourages with his language of transformation potentially entail radical possibilities of political praxis. But the gap between theory and practice, like that between words and

meanings, requires translation (interpretation and understanding) which involves both enquiry and courage. Only by making a commitment towards comprehending the systems and paradigms that organise our lives (bound by the limitations of situation, circumstances and individual understanding) can the individual perceive that the struggle for self-determination and communal cultural identity (which is part of Ireland's present crisis) is inextricably part of the re-reading and reconstruction that Friel promotes.

#### **v texts as enquiries — not artefacts**

Throughout this thesis I have argued that Friel's translations contribute to and form part of the same human continuum, enquiries into culture and change. It is nonetheless striking, as Cronin points out, that in a country where translation has been an integral part of the educational, legal and administrative activities of the State since 1922, sixty years elapsed before translation studies began to feature as a distinct area of academic enquiry. This late development of translation studies is, in part, an effect of the ideology of revivalism since teaching translation is an open acknowledgement of bilingualism, something the nascent State hesitated to admit. Consequently, when translation practice was taught in Irish departments, it was mainly as a language exercise. As history shows, however, the irony is that ignoring the reality of translation inevitably leads to the return of the linguistically repressed. As Cronin points out, the undermining of the lexical and syntactic specificity of Irish is greatly accelerated through a failure to examine the phenomenon of translation in detail. One consequence of this is that the extensive translation tradition remained largely in the realm of close textual scholarship so that its potential contribution to contemporary debates on translation theory and practice went generally unheeded.

As, following Bassnett-McGuire and Cronin, I have argued, this lack of reflexive analysis (treating texts as artefacts instead of enquiries) slowly diminishes as the realms of practice and theory are expanded. In Ireland, prompted by pressures of change and its effect on language, many of the Field Day associates have contributed to the expansion of translation activity. Standard English and its influence are being re-written and, Friel might aver, language itself is being re-read for possibilities of change. For Friel, the rapidity and extent of change in Ireland, including the realities of political violence and economic depression, require a more congruent form of enquiry and expression. His use of translation as cultural metaphor articulates his belief that the inherited images and definitions of national life, of social origins and expectations, fail to account for much individual and collective experience. To paraphrase Steiner and Friel, the linguistic contour no longer matches the landscape of

fact. If *Translations* advised a certain linguistic vigilance in the 1980s, then the rewritings over the subsequent ten years confirm Friel's sustained appeal for cultural re-visioning of language, for an accommodation of differences and the possibilities of change.

Ultimately my understanding of the necessity to translate in order to face change is enriched by Friel's endeavours, and especially his rewriting of the Russian works, because these translations are acts of cultural confidence and exploration. Implicit throughout my reading of Friel's translations is the assertion that Hiberno English is ghosted by Gaelic and the ongoing effects of past colonisation. As interpretative acts of deliberate re-territorialisation, Friel's translations contest not only unidirectional translation (Irish into English) but they also question Ireland's and my own critical posture and strategies of self-location. They affirm that translation is at once a hermeneutical resource (enquiry) and a way of coping with the 'necessary uncertainty' of 'inevitable changes.' 'Don't expect too much', Friel tells us, 'I will provide you with the available words and the available grammar. But will that help you to interpret between privacies? I have no idea. But it's all we have' (*T* 446).

## vi conclusion

*'There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism'*

(Benjamin)<sup>6</sup>

Ireland has a history of real and perceived injustices, limited political consent and ongoing paramilitary campaigns and as its cultural history testifies, Irish literature, especially its drama, has survived, even flourished, in tension with recurring socio-political crises. The dynamics that brought about the Rising of 1916 produced both the division of Ireland and a flood of literary, cultural and political activity. The energies fuelling the present crisis have similarly moved many to comment and question, where previously expression was inhibited. Seamus Heaney conjures this geography in his poem, 'Whatever You Say Say Nothing.' In this cautionary Northern tale we see that 'good' community relations are held together by a tacit agreement not to touch on contentious issues. But implicitly Heaney asks if public silence deadens private argument and helps delineate the borders, private and public, personal and political, North and South. 'Smoke signals are loud-mouthed compared with us ... / O land of password, handgrip, wink and nod.' The very fact of Heaney's poem is, in itself, an expression of possibilities of change.

As I have argued in my examination of Friel's translations, contemporary Irish dramatists (and especially Heaney, McGuinness and Kilroy) are aware of the reflexive aspect of their art and self-imposed task: to find a language capable of conveying the limitations of language and, by interrogating the sources of disjunction that result when language fails to accommodate experience, creating reflexively theatrical performance.

With his rewritings of Turgenev and Chekhov, and plays such as *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, Friel uses the myriad translations inherent in dramatic representation to promote critical response in what he terms his constituents, to make people 'think twice.' This is an invitation not to think in Irish as opposed to English but to think in terms of how the words may be understood; as he says, 'we want to know have the words any meaning at all.' In short, Friel contributes to this critical endeavour through an aesthetic decolonisation above and beyond the printed texts, realised through *performances* that *speak* directly to the plurality of Irish experience. Friel replaces the passage from 'savagery to civility' — the master narrative of modernity — with self-locution, affirming that the project of decolonisation involves exhaustive dismantling of the logic of identity as singular that at every level structures and maintains the post-colonial moment (constant reference and reverence to the coloniser).

Friel maintains that while there is a difference between ethico-political representation (as in government) and the ethical representations of a drama, he believes that it is possible, even desirable, to establish a dialogue between the two voices. Hence, for Friel, representation, political, aesthetic or otherwise, points to and enquires into ethical-political systems (such as government and education) by which identity and participation in the national community or communities are effected and regulated. One purpose behind his plays is to show how notions of 'nation' elicit or require particular modes of identification, often essentialist and opposed to differences. Accordingly, Friel's dissidents or outsiders often exercise strategies of dis-identification, since in the drive for national hegemony over self-representation and differences, no cultural space is offered for non-conformists. More so than ever before, Friel maintains that contemporary Ireland is less coherent but more interesting than 'Mother Ireland.' And because of this, the socio-political significance of his translations as an active force in the processes of social enquiry and transformation cannot be underestimated. In performance, they analyse socio-political dynamics within which they *speak* as one possible narrative form and, in a post-colonial context, the importance of such different narratives is irreducible. Another purpose behind his plays is the representation and celebration of differences, differences which in themselves require a free and just life for all. In 1965 Friel

stated: 'I hope to encourage ... sympathy and intelligence and understanding ... never crusading nor suggesting for a minute that [the] people I write about are more important than anybody else.'<sup>7</sup>

Friel's theatre, dramatising the relationship between language and power, between language and identity, between words and meaning, gives voice to the crisis of language and the fact of the fragmented self. His drama interrogates the power of hegemonic paradigms to include and exclude representations of difference. For Friel, drama is not a mirror, merely mimetic, reflecting or representing a more or less 'natural' community, all of whose members occupy an undifferentiated space. With plays such as *The Freedom of the City* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, what Friel shows is that theatre, like language, is contrived. It must, he insists, question and comment upon systems of representation responsible for and involved in ethical and political institutions. Accordingly, another purpose behind his endeavours is that of enquiry and resistance to the homogenising influence of institutional theatre. And while Friel insists that he never writes as a crusader, he *is* interested in systems that seek to regulate society and the role of a theatre of enquiry within society. Even as a young man Friel was sceptical of the revolutionary power of theatre, maintaining that audiences would not

storm out of a theatre and pull down a Government. [Nor would] they storm out of a theatre and build homes for people that haven't got houses. But there is always the chance that a few people will retain a certain amount of the spontaneous reaction that they experienced within the theatre building and that they will think about this when they come outside. And perhaps they may do something.<sup>8</sup>

And while Friel believes it is the role of the writer 'to be intelligible' and to 'spotlight a situation ... with clarity and understanding', he insists that it is the role of the audience to translate, a task, he suggests that can be approached through a conscious balance of heart and head, a balance that is imperative at every level, individual, community and state. Over thirty years later he reiterated this belief calling for a type of 'eternal linguistic vigilance', insisting that 'we've got to keep questioning until we find some kind of generosity that can embrace the whole island.'<sup>9</sup> There is nothing partisan in such a statement but it does signal the ethico-political changes Friel believes to be crucial to contemporary Irish life. Friel's theatre, and particularly his translations, privileging communication and understanding, exercise a range of heterogeneous devices and acts of appropriation in order to provide a socio-cultural self-critical forum that talks to Irish experience.

Friel's vision includes not *what* to say, but the *differing ways* in which experience can be articulated and understood and he believes that relations of difference are not problematic if recognition is reciprocal, facilitating self-realisation. His theatre, then, is self-critical and

encourages transformation. But, the critico-political nature of this endeavour is itself located and brought into being in the wider discourse, in the systems that organise and regulate life in Ireland, and not just the Irish dramatic tradition. Consequently, the 'play', for Friel, begins after performance.

Aesthetic form can, Friel asserts, promote reflection and self-location, perhaps even acceptance of the 'necessary uncertainty' that is part of contemporary existence and inevitable change. As Thomas Kilroy has remarked, recent Irish writing has as a recurrent theme 'not so much the experience of participating in modern life as the anguished process of adapting to it, given a quite dissimilar and distant starting point.'<sup>10</sup> Friel's plays explore this anguished process through the metaphor of translation and, reflecting upon this changing world, they argue not so much for an acceptance of its anguish as for an accommodation of differences and the concomitant provision of freedom and justice within the evolving relations and space. That space is at once Friel's theatre and the larger socio-political arena it interrogates.

It is possible to examine the values and meanings explored in that space if it offers reflections that relate to lived experience. This is not to argue intrinsic value, a concept logically and historically attached to the idea of unmediated reality. The possibility of examining value and meaning in drama or literature is subject to criteria that have, in the past, proved as fixed and inflexible as they are arbitrary, so that often such evaluation reveals more about the valuing system than the intrinsic value of the object. Critical responses to Friel's translations have yet to deviate from this fixed and outmoded method. But we cannot examine the value and meaning and communicative efficiency of Friel's translations unless we are prepared to acknowledge the nature and purpose of his renovations, the new ground proposed and traversed, and its interrogative relationship to pre-existing forms and existing translation debates. Friel's translations cannot be subjected to or evaluated by the same criteria that categorise orthodox, inter-lingual translations. Just as Baile Beag references the wider context, so Friel's translations are part of the larger body of his work which, including *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, addresses enshrined issues such as 'faith' and 'fatherland', sexuality, repression and the fragmented self. In Friel's hands, the pondering cadences of the Russians' works are idiomatically pointed so that at moments they reflect the same painful contemporaneity of works such as *The Gentle Island*, *The Freedom of the City*, *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*, plays of betrayal and self-betrayal, that show the disabling effect of uncritical existence caught between the rival claims of tradition and modernity.

With his translations and his own plays, Friel indicates that the Irish must be free to ask where paradigms come from and how we may re-read their significance. Like Ricoeur, Friel believes that it is necessary to preserve the tension between tradition and modernisation. Such an enterprise requires courage and reciprocity, an acknowledgment of past sources and how these can meaningfully inform the present. This will, Friel believes, involve a paradigm shift. He does not believe that literature, with its depiction of historical moments of change and transition, can assume a fixed, original or prototypical position. But, he insists, drama can remain vital as long as its enquiry is open to re-reading and re-definition and, equally, a culture can accommodate contradictions and change.

This thesis has examined Friel's methods of culling and re-voicing the significance of works of Turgenev and Chekhov, re-shaping them for his purposes. In turn, it has examined how these translations have been received by critics and thereby re-asserts Said's affirmation (quoted in the Introduction) that 'the realities of power and authority — as well as the resistance offered by men, women and social movements to institutions, authorities and orthodoxies — are the realities that make texts possible, that deliver them to their readers, that solicit the attention of critics.'<sup>11</sup>

Friel re-presents his translations through Hiberno English characterisation and context, demarcating the narrative and socio-political space through which characters move in a pre-existing range of patterns of behaviour. He does so in order to acknowledge their Russianness, their differences and commonalities, searching for justice and revivifying change *and* their consanguinity with Irish dramatic types and situations. As Michael Cronin suggests, translations such as these bring apparently different cultures into close dialogue. Like many interpreters before him, Friel's method develops from within the geography of his own target audiences. He takes, invents and picks over his sources as 'stepping stones.' Primarily they are manipulated to re-present Irish temporality and change, but also to establish commonalties between differences, between the cultures of Russia and Ireland, and within and between the cultures of his communities.

Friel's alterations have been governed by his focus upon communication and relationships, and upon understanding the long-term effects of historical traumas (such as colonisation, translation and the prolonged absence of an egalitarian political culture). Such effects include disabling, exclusive myths, the repression of historical memory, and the consoling fictions developed to contain its explosiveness. The same can be claimed for Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. It can be interpreted as a work prompting increasing self-questioning and moving its readers to gradual self-consciousness by tracing and reversing the

tale of national discovery and homecoming. And although commissioned by an English theatre, Friel's version, for his purposes of decolonisation and self-location, becomes (especially through the alterations to Turgenev's Arkady Kirsanov and Katya Odintsova) a drama where the private happiness of the son and daughter sublates (refusing to regard as fact) the historical dislocation of the original (Russia and Ireland). Hence Friel makes the universal tellable by reducing it to the personal and encourages possibilities of change. In the face of the past three decades of violence in Ireland, is this unduly optimistic, giving the violence of history retroactive meaning and purpose? Friel's Katya, Arkady and Fenichka (none without unease) are individual portraits, portraits that express a faith in the possibilities of change. What remains to be seen is whether or not this type of rewriting actually succours the necessary decolonisation and re-reading, changing perception and attitudes so that communities can re-member and embrace change.

Friel's translations are purposeful and hopeful in their manipulation of literature graced with ethical considerations. The concerns that distinguish the work of Turgenev and Chekhov are ever-relevant and this is one reason why Friel chose to rework them. Their works have been construed as laments for the decline of the privileged, just as Irish revolutionary writers have been deradicalised for revivalist or 'revisionist' purposes. Critics can fill the pure space of contraries and possibilities of change with certainties, so that a work like *Waiting for Godot*, an essay on the power relations of theatricality and representation, can be reinscribed as a landscape of hopelessness. Equally, a work like *Translations* can be reinscribed more in terms of critics' own fore-meanings as a 'national classic' or a 'play of treason' rather than an enquiry into modernity. And, without care, *Dancing At Lughnasa* can be described as being 'concerned with obsessive Irish themes, notably the collision between romance and reality that results from the national disposition for mythologizing and dreaming ... combin[ing] Chekhovian techniques with nostalgic memory devices borrowed from Tennessee Williams.'<sup>12</sup> 'The danger', as Beckett reminds us, 'is the neatness of identifications.' Little wonder Friel's Tim Gallagher suggests that 'Maybe silence is the perfect discourse' (CC 92).

Gallagher's is not a flippant remark, nor nihilistic, but an utterance by one exasperated by the phonocentrism of Western culture, which presupposes that speech is the meaningful expression of the self. This code of certainty informs the character of Captain Lancey in *Translations* who (like many before and since) 'wonders' why the Irish do not or will not speak English. Again, when Spenser informs us 'it have ever been the use of the conqueror to destroy the language of the conquered and to force him by all means to learn his', he reveals



the values system and the means by which those, like Lancey, disallow the speech of the subaltern, the dispossessed.

To counter and destabilise such colonisation, cultural activity in Ireland, and especially the contemporary dramatic tradition, has constantly resorted to myth, metaphor, irony, contradictions, rumour and malapropisms, and more recently, to idiomatic re-appropriation. These rhetorical devices can be seen as *performances* of resistance to phonocentrism with its inevitable definitive interpretation of texts and translations. From within the linguistic contours of the dominant language, such devices illustrate the multifariousness and indeterminacy of language, disclosing the critical and potentially transformative relations of the phenomena represented in works. They demonstrate that 'necessary uncertainty' makes life and communication complex but keeps meaning fluid and open.

Friel's translations have generic affiliations with the Russian originals but destabilise 'standard' English interpretations and representations. They are, as he states, 'stepping stones.' Using tropes, irony and parody to resist fixity and closure, his translations frame the Russia of Turgenev and Chekhov in an Irish idiom so as to challenge Irish social discourse, paradigms, generic conventions and stereotypes.

Irish critics frequently invoke the values of European individualism, values which, however admirable in themselves, have often been used to justify the colonialism from which Ireland is slowly emerging. The decolonisation Friel proposes does not seek to erase English. Rather, it involves Ireland's communities finding their own voices and ending the folly of neglecting what is Irish in favour of indiscriminately adopting everything that is English simply because it is English. Decolonisation, according to Friel, involves overcoming dispossession *and* self-repression; not ignoring Shakespeare, Milton, Blake or Shelley but reading them in a richer and more various way than previously countenanced by the educational authorities.

In *Give Me Your Answer, Do!* (1997) Friel once again emphasises the danger of pursuing 'the substantial confirmation, the tangible evidence', 'sell[ing] for an affirmation, for an answer, to be free of that grinding uncertainty' (*GAD* 79). Speaking about her writer-husband, Daisy tells us:

uncertainty is necessary. He must live with that uncertainty, that necessary uncertainty. Because there can be no verdicts, no answers. Indeed there must be no verdicts. Because being alive is the postponement of verdicts, isn't it? Because verdicts are provided only when it's all over, all concluded.

And just as the bereaved Bazarovs repeat their *Te Deum*, and the Kirsanovs drink an uneasy toast to Bazarov and the future, so Daisy Connolly, despite her 'half-an-hour [old] vow to give up gin forever and ever', pours herself another gin and drinks 'To the Necessary Uncertainty' and 'plays *On Wings of Song* - as at the opening of the play.' If these are 'consoling fictions', they are also human affirmations that life goes on, sometimes meaningful and rewarding, sometimes without succour. 'Verdicts are provided only when it's all over, all concluded' (GAD 80).

As claimed at the outset, language and culture are vitalised by differences. In its anguished knowledge of disunity, echoed down through the centuries, the ongoing challenge facing Ireland is how to live with discontinuity and differences without resorting to exclusive fantasies or paradigms.

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<sup>1</sup>. *Letters from Wittgenstein*. Ed. P. Englemann. Transl. L. Furtmuller. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967. 97.

<sup>2</sup>. Brian Friel, "Extracts from a Sporadic Diary." *The Writers: A Sense of Ireland*. Ed. Andrew Carpenter and Peter Fallon. Dublin: O'Brien Press, 1980. 42.

<sup>3</sup>. Kevin Whelan suggests that in the post-Famine period, the Papacy, under Pius IX (1846-1878), moved to combat what it saw as the insidious effects of modernisation and secularisation, created by an urban, industrial society which was increasingly rationalist, pluralist and "Godless". Pius IX substituted the centrality of the Papacy (ultramontanist) in Catholicism, replacing the protective custody of the shattered Ancien Régime, and promulgated infallibility as the response to enlightenment claims. Kevin Whelan. *The Tree of Liberty, Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity 1760-1830*. Cork: Cork UP in association with Field Day, 1996.

<sup>4</sup>. Brian Friel. "Introductory essay." Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*. 1992. 10-11.

<sup>5</sup>. *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup>. Benjamin's words caution the researcher that all documents have gaps and it is their task to examine these since they represent silences in the known. He endorsed critically re-reading of culture and tradition in order to embrace the 'revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past.' Walter Benjamin. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations*. Ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Cape, 1970. 258 and 265.

<sup>7</sup>. Interview. Friel-Morison. "An Ulster Writer: Brian Friel." *Acorn*. Derry: Magee College, Spring (1965): 4-15 (5).

<sup>8</sup>. *Ibid* 4-15 (5).

<sup>9</sup>. Interview. Friel-Carty. "Finding voice in a language not our own." *Sunday Independent* 5 Oct. 1980.

<sup>10</sup>. Thomas Kilroy. "Tellers of Tales." *Times Literary Supplement* 17 Mar. 1972, 302.

<sup>11</sup>. Said. 1983. 5.

<sup>12</sup>. Robert Brustein. *Theatre Ireland* 29 (1991): 49-51:

**Appendix 1: A network of on-stage and off-stage signs in *Translations***

(voicing local and other names, placenames and influences)

**Writers:**

Aeschylus 432,  
 Caesar 432,  
 Euripides 400,  
 Homer 383, 384, 385, 386 x 2, 396, 402, 438,  
 439,  
 Tacitus 393,  
 Ovid 417, 442,  
 Pliny 397,  
 Sophocles 398,  
 Virgil 392 x 2, 432,  
 William Wordsworth 417,  
 Wordsworth 417 x 2,

**Mythological figures:**

Apollo 386, 416,  
 Athene 385 x 3, 443,  
 Cuchulainn 416,  
 Diana 388,  
 Diarmuid 386,  
 Ferdia 416,  
 Grania 386 x 5,  
 Helen 386,  
 Paris 416,  
 Termon, Terminus, 418,  
 Ulysses 385 x 2, 387 x 2, 445,  
 Zeus 386.

**Gaelic and anglicised placenames:**

Baile Beag 391, 395, 403, 405, 407, 414, 416,  
 439,  
 Ballybeg 414, 415, 416, 439, 444,  
 Baile na gGall 414,  
 Binhone 410,  
 Bunowen 410,  
 Buncrana 396,  
 Bun na hAbhann 403, 410 x 7, 428, 433, 439,  
 440,  
 Burnfoot 410 x 5, 411, 439, 440, 444,  
 Banowen 410,  
 Carraig an Phoill 429,  
 Carraig na Ri 390, 414, 429,  
 Cean Balor 414,  
 Cnoc na nGabhar 429, 434,  
 Cnoc na Mona 394, 429,  
 Cnoc na Ri 439,  
 Croc na Mona 390,  
 Dramduff 413,  
 Dramduffy 413 x 2,  
 Drium Dubh 411 x 2, 413, 429, 439,

Dromduff 413, 414, 439,  
 Drium 411/ Dubh 411,  
 Druim Luachra 411, 413,  
 Dublin 402 x 2, 412,  
 Dunboy 444,  
 Ennis 399,  
 Erris Peninsula 432,  
 Fair Hill 440, 444,  
 Fair Head 418,  
 Fort of the Pigs 418,  
 Glenties 445,  
 Greenbank 444,  
 Greencastle 418,  
 Inis Meadhon 423 x 5, 425, 431, 432,  
 Kerry 400,  
 Kings Head 439, 444,  
 Lis Maol 414, 429,  
 Lis na Muc 418 x 2, 439  
 Lis na nGall 429,  
 Lis na nGradh 429, 441,  
 Loch na mEan 429,  
 Loch an Iubhair 415, 429,  
 Machaire Ban 439,  
 Machaire Buidhe 393, 429,  
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## Appendix 2: *Translations* — programme notes

Three excerpts appear on the first page of Field Day's programme, each of which conjures up relations of power. The first (quoted in Andrews's *Paper Landscape*) is from Lord Salisbury (1883): 'The most disagreeable part of the three Kingdoms is Ireland, and therefore Ireland has a splendid map.' Coupling 'Ireland' and 'disagreeable' sets the stage for a play of more than topographical action. The dynamics of control are further suggested by a fragment from Heidegger which also prefaces *After Babel*: 'Man behaves as if he were the master of language, whereas in fact it is language which remains his mistress. When this relationship of dominance is inverted, man has recourse to strange contrivances.' Heidegger's words call attention to the power of language and its epistemological ramifications also examined by Steiner. The third quotation on this first programme page offers a definition of 'Field-day' as 'A day on which troops are drawn up for exercise in field evolution; a military review, a day occupied with brilliant or exciting events; a day spent in the field, e.g. by the hunt, or by field naturalists.' These three quotations can be read as indicating an exploration of power relations, linguistic and material. They can be read as offering a unifying sense of direction. Or they can be taken as signalling an historic process, one that is opening up the past to re-viewing.

The first quotation relates to the historical past and the conflictual relationship between Ireland and England. The second proposes a recognition of the power and multiplicity of language. This aspect of dominance and change, coupled with the idea of 'evolution' and 'brilliant and exciting events' in the third quotation, can, in the context of Ireland, suggest a bridge between the alienated relations of the nineteenth century and new possibilities, with a day of freedom for all in the open air. Such a definition distances itself from triumphalist field day associations.<sup>1</sup> Placed alongside the possibilities of change suggested in the Heidegger quotation, the definition could be seen as Friel's mapping out of new psychic and social spaces.

Page two of the programme notes begins with a quotation from Dowling's *Hedge Schools*, contextualising these as peasant institutions, maintained by the people from Cromwellian times up to the 1920s, and indicating that the 'poorest and humblest of the schools gave instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic; Latin, Greek, Mathematics.' Dowling notes the decline of the vernacular, 'rapidly falling into decay during the eighteenth century ... owing to the great value of English on the fair and market' (a fact alluded to by Hugh in the play) but Dowling's final paragraph reports that nonetheless 'the hedge schools

were the most vital force in popular education in Ireland during the eighteenth century. They emerged in the nineteenth century more vigorous still, outnumbering all other schools, and so profoundly national as to hasten the introduction of a State system of education in 1831.’ Dowling finally maintains that English became the most widely spread mode of instruction in the hedge schools. However, the school featured in *Translations* is neither a bastion of nationalism nor a thriving seat of learning. This leads me to argue that Friel was calling for a much wider reading of the school and its function than a romanticised or stereotypical one, hence the opening school image with its maimed trio.

Dowling’s comment on the hedge schools is followed by another, from *The Autobiography of William Carleton*. Born in 1794, Carleton recollects how he attended a hedge school in a barn and, by the age of fourteen, ‘had only got as far as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Justin, and the first chapter of John in the Greek Testament.’ Further affirming the vitality of the hedge schools, an extract from the memoirs of the Reverend Mr. Alexander Ross, Rector, Dungiven, County Derry (1814), records how ‘even in the wildest districts, it is not unusual to meet with good classical scholars ... whose knowledge and taste in the Latin poets, might put to the blush many who have all the advantage of established schools and regular instruction.’ Dowling points out that the hedge schools’ classical curriculum prepared many for the priesthood but Hugh’s school hardly prepares its pupils for survival.

But if page two of the programme notes appears, ironically, to argue ‘for’ the hedge schools, the third page presents an argument for the National schools, with its extract from *A History of Ireland* by historian Edmund Curtis, a statements by Colonel Thomas Colby, Royal Engineers (1835) and an extract from the Thomas Spring Rice Report.

In the first quotation historian Edmund Curtis notes the great educational success of the National system (1831) and, conversely, the ‘fatal effects [it had] on the Irish language and the old Gaelic tradition’, pointing out that this system of education, ‘combined with the influence of [Daniel] O’Connell, [and] many of the priests and other leaders who looked on Irish as a barrier to progress, soon made rapid inroads on the native speech.’ Parallels with Curtis’s findings on the internal erosion of Gaelic (like the observations of Dowling, Carleton and Ross) can be found in Friel’s text, reinforcing the literary and historic re-reading he proposes. The National schools were founded, among other things, to counter sectarianism, and in this they obviously failed. For the instruction texts were totally English and reflected a very real absence of self-reference or any sense of worth in being Irish. It is intriguing that the programme offers only one historian’s view. One possible reason for this might be the

citing of O'Connell, and English as the path of 'progress', an argument advanced by Maire Chatach in the play. Presented as it is, the extract appears to be offered as a true and representative picture, affirming the 'great success' of the educational system. However, if education is the drawing out of the individual as opposed to the inculcation of 'facts', then the present crisis in Ireland, North and South, confirms that the educational system continues to leave many ill-equipped for survival.

Curtis's comments are followed in the programme by an extract from a contemporary account in which Captain Thomas Colby's extract states that the intention was 'to carry on a minute Survey [executed by a] 'new department [formed] for the purpose.' He notes that the maps about to be constructed would 'establish a standard orthography' where 'the mode of spelling of names of places [was] peculiarly vague and unsettled' and 'for future reference, to identify the several localities with the names by which they had formerly been called.' The extract offers readers an important piece of information, namely, that the Survey's task was to establish a standard orthography, not to eliminate Gaelic names *per se*. Hence the play's anglicising of names appears to contradict the fact. Audiences are potentially alerted to this inaccuracy with the publication of Colby's comments, and thus the programme notes establish the possibility of a dialectic.

The third extract, from the Spring Rice Report (advocating a general survey of Ireland), notes that 'the general tranquillity of Europe' enabled the mapping which, 'though not unimportant in a military point of view, recommends itself more directly as a civil measure.' The extract concludes, 'in that portion of the Empire to which it more particularly applies, it cannot but be received as a proof of the disposition of the legislature to adopt all measures calculated to *advance the interests of Ireland*' [my emphasis]. Friel gives the italicised phrase to Captain Lancey (*T* 407) and this can be read in at least two ways. There is the suggestion that an historical record is being used to confirm the authenticity of the images in the play but these words may be ironic because they are followed by an untruthful translation by Owen, compounding the motif of erosion from within as well as from without. However, when Lancey's and Owen's words are combined in performance, there is the potential for them to lead audiences towards agreeing with Manus that the survey is 'a bloody military operation' (*T* 408). Certainly this seems to have been the effect on critics such as McGinley, Cronin, Rushe, McClelland and Jordan.

Had Friel included some of the more resonant quotations regarding the 'images of history' and the 'opulent syntax', at this point, indicating their source in Steiner, they might have underlined Friel's constant use of ironic undercutting and indicated that the linguistic

dynamics of translation as exchange and betrayal were a form of linguistic imperialism. As it was, an acknowledgement of ‘assistance derived from George Steiner’s *After Babel* published by Oxford University Press’ appeared on the last page at the end of a list of thanks to various persons for props, clothing, Guildhall staff, etc. The title, publishing details, and I suggest, the acknowledgement of debt, were incomplete. In addition, the *Paper Landscape* of John Andrews is conspicuous by its absence despite the fact that Friel elsewhere acknowledges it as a source.

Page four provides four extracts from John O’Donovan’s 1835 account, referring to the specific localities, inhabitants and their customs, the Name Books, and one particular translator. Friel indicates that he modelled his translator, Owen, on O’Donovan, injecting the former with something of the latter’s actual sense of frustration. Overall the extracts reflect O’Donovan’s meticulous care and detail in an immensely difficult and frustrating task. They record details of rural isolation, poverty, homes, habits, clothing, diet and climate, and indicate the presence of a pluralistic approach to naming the landscape by different sections of the community. Once again, such information appears to authenticate the images of the play.

The last extract refers to the Glenties (an area closely associated with Friel’s family and, particularly, *Dancing at Lughnasa*).<sup>2</sup> The extract describes the bustle and confusion of a fair-day at Dunglow and ‘crowds of the women of the mountains ... going to the stocking fair of Dunglow ... [bearing] deep graven on their visages the effects of poverty and smoke [from turf fires], of their having been kept alive by the potato only.’ This extract, with images characteristic of the painter, William Conor (1881-1969), concludes with images of a field of rotting, green and empty-headed grain stalks — a prelude to famine. Again, parallel details are found in the play.

With the O’Donovan extracts, I maintain that Friel was drawing parallels (in an analogous manner, similar to his use of Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons*) and prompting enquiry and change, rather than offering a mirror up to his audiences. After all, his collision of history and imagination demonstrates that he recognises the lie of both languages but also the rich potential of re-reading their narratives. Southern Irish critics in particular have, I believe, interpreted the play’s images and perhaps these programme notes as mirrors because read in this manner, both confirm the Republican Nationalist myth of dispossession. They do so, however, without drawing any analogy between the dramatised plight and its current residue or Friel’s call for revivifying change.



The fifth programme page contains a short, pithy poem by Seamus Heaney significantly titled 'After the Irish' and printed in both Gaelic and English. Heaney's poem, summed up in its title, acknowledges the demise of a tradition. The speaker delights in a small bird's chirp, hears 'woodnotes' and 'the Lagan blackbird.' Attention is cast 'northeast', locating a seal, and closes by opening the eyes and mind on to the never-ending 'fill and run' of life's tides. Like Friel's play, it ends by returning us to the 'eternal note of sadness', of perpetual change but accented with possibilities. The rhythms in Gaelic are sparse yet evocative. The working process is of the particular, and the all embracing: a small bird, 'a chirp' of golden notes surrounded by a vast ebb and flow. It is, like Friel's play, the poetics of inevitable change; 'tides fill and run.' Out of such 'tossed seascapes' we can envision the tradition and time that has been, and that can be again. We are invited to expand our perceptions, to 'look far' and to hear and understand the conceit of sudden, whingold notes (so different from Yeats' golden notes of a jewelled bird in Byzantium). This is a sited work: 'Lagan', 'northeast.' Heaney intends that it be heard and en-vised. Like Friel's play, the poem expresses the near-impossibility of 'coming into being' but its translation confirms the necessity of facing inevitabilities.

It is possible to suggest that by including this poem and the various extracts, Friel and Field Day hoped to affect audiences' responses, even before the play commenced. This claim is substantiated not only by the selection of information in the programme notes but also by the absence of a curtain, allowing audiences to 'read' the stage site pre-performance. Thus, through the programme notes and the set, links to other times are established even before the play begins.

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<sup>1</sup>. In Ireland the word 'field' refers to a portion of enclosed land (as in John B. Keane's play title *The Field*) but it is also associated with 12th of July triumphalist celebrations of the Battle of the Boyne (1690) held in a field at Lambeg.

<sup>2</sup>. Something of the extreme poverty recorded in the fourth extract, regarding women going to the stocking fair of Dunglow, probably finds symbolic representation in *Translations* and *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

### Appendix 3: Comparative Translations

The following comparisons show how Friel's alterations, voiced within the contemporary situation in Ireland, acquire not only a familiar but a poetico-ethical dimension.

1901—Chekhov's Vershinin: *I mozhet stat'sia, chto nasha tepereshniaia zhizn', s kotoroi my tak mirimsia, budet so vremenem kazat'sia strannoi, neudobnoi, neumnoi, nedostatochno chistoi, byt' mozhet, dazhe greshnoi ...*<sup>1</sup>

1923—Constance Garnett's Vershinin: ... And it may be that our present life, which we accept so readily, will in time seem queer, uncomfortable, not sensible, not clean enough, perhaps even sinful ... (TS 15)<sup>2</sup>

1959—Elisaveta Fen's Vershinin: It may well be that in time to come the life we live today will seem strange and uncomfortable and stupid and not too clean, either, and perhaps even wicked ... (TS 260)

1964—Ronald Hingley's Vershinin: And it may turn out the same with our present way of life - it suits us all right, but one day it may look odd, inconvenient, foolish, and not all that reputable either. It may even seem terribly sinful. (TS 179)

1977—Eugene K. Bristow's Vershinin: '... And it may happen that our present life, which we have come to terms with, will - in the course of time - appear strange, inconvenient, and stupid - by no means pure enough, even terribly sinful, perhaps ... (TS 111)

1981—Brian Friel's Vershinin: 'God alone knows<sup>3</sup> how the way we live will be assessed. To us it's - it's how we live, our norm. But maybe in retrospect it will look anxious and tense. Maybe even ... morally wrong. Well ... ' [Stage direction: 'He spreads his hands in dismissal of his solemnity'] (TS 22).

1983—Michael Frayn's Vershinin: And it may be that our present way of life, with which we feel so much at home, will in some time seem odd, uncomfortable, foolish, not as clean as it should be - perhaps even wicked. (TS 12)

1990—Frank McGuinness's Vershinin: So it may be with the way we lead our lives. We accept it without questioning it, but will it seem strange, perverse, foolish, without principle, even, possibly, sinful? (TS 10)

The following comparisons illustrate Friel's use of localisation which, in its context, carries a psychological quality. Like the above quotation, it is typical of Chekhov's dour optimist but it is given some sort of continuity by the colonel's ability to see beauty in contemporary life, even in the midst of hardship and unreason.

1901—Chekhov's Vershinin: *Oдно время я жил на Неметской улице. С Неметской улицы я хазживал в Красные казармы. Там по пути угрюмый мост, под которым вода шумит. Одиному станювисья грустно на душе. [Пауза.] А здеся́ кая́я широкая, кая́я богата́я река! Чудесная река!*<sup>4</sup>

1923—Garnett's Vershinin: At one time I lived in Nyemetsky Street. I used to go from there to the Red Barracks. There is a gloomy-looking bridge on the way, where the water makes a noise. It makes a lonely man feel melancholy [a pause.] And here what a broad, splendid river! A marvellous river! (TS 14)

1959—Fen's Vershinin: At one time I lived in the Niemietskaya Street. I used to walk from there to the Krasny Barracks, and I remember there was such a gloomy bridge I had to cross. I used to hear the noise of the water rushing under it. I

remember how lonely and sad I felt there. [A pause]. But what a magnificently wide river you have here! It's a marvellous river! (TS 259)

1964—Hingley's Vershinin: I lived in Nemetsky street at one time. Used to walk to the Red Barracks from there. You cross a gloomy-looking bridge on the way and you can hear the water rushing underneath it - a depressing place when you're on your own. [Pause] But what a magnificent wide river you have here. It's a splendid river. (TS 179)

1977—Bristow's Vershinin: I lived on Nemetskaya Street at one time I used to walk from Nemetskaya Street to the Krasny Barracks. On the way there you cross over a dark and dreary bridge, and under the break your heart. [Pause.] But here you have a broad, wonderful river! A marvellous river! (TS 110)

1983—Frayn's Vershinin: At one time I lived in Nemetskaya Street. I used to walk from there to the Krasny Barracks. There's a rather depressing bridge on the way - you can hear the noise of the water underneath it. If you're on your own it strikes a chill into your heart. [Pause] But here you have such a broad and brimming river! A magnificent river! (TS 11)

1981—Friel's Vershinin: I used to live in Nyemetsky Street. I could walk to the Red Barracks from there. And on the way you had to cross this black bridge and underneath you could just hear the water - a kind of throaty, strangled sound. It was so - hah! - it wasn't the liveliest place to pass on your way to work every morning by yourself. [Suddenly interested in the view from the window] Well, look at that! And the river! Isn't that a really beautiful view! (TS 21)

1990—McGuinness's Vershinin: One time I lived in Nemetski Street. I used to walk from Nemetskii to the Krasnyi Barracks. There's a dark bridge on the way there, water rushing beneath it. A bad place for a lonely man. [Silence] The river here is so wide and flowing. A wonderful river. (TS 9)

The following quotation comes just after Ferapont has recalled hearsay accounts of the excesses of Moscovites and, ironically, renders their activities as absurd. A comparison between 'standard' translations and Friel's version of Ferapont's response to Andrey's question as to whether he has ever been to Moscow (TS 42) is instructive, showing the contentment of a non-sophisticate.

1901—Chekhov's Ferapont: (*posle pauzy*) [after a pause] '*Ne byl. Ne privel bog.*' [I wasn't. God didn't bring it about] (Pauza) '*Mne idti?*' [Shall I go?]

1959—Fen's Ferapont: 'No. It wasn't God's wish. [A pause] Shall I go?.'<sup>5</sup>

1964—Hingley's Ferapont: '(After a pause) No, the chance never came my way. (Pause) Shall I go now?''<sup>6</sup>

1977—Bristow's Ferapont: '[after a pause] Never was. God did not grant it. [Pause] All right for me to go?''<sup>7</sup>

1981—Friel's Ferapont: 'Me! Oh, God, no. Moscow? Oh, never, never. If it had been the will of God I would have been, though. But there you are' (TS 42).

1990—McGuinness's Ferapont: 'I haven't, no. Not God's will. (*Silence*) Will I leave?.'<sup>8</sup>

1993—Frayn's Ferapont: (*after a pause*) 'Never. It wasn't God's will. (*Pause*) Am I to go?'<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>. A.P. Chekhov (1984) 4.443. Translation: 'And it may happen that our present life, with which we are so reconciled, will with time seem strange, awkward, unintelligent, insufficiently pure, perhaps even sinful ...' John Goodliffe, Univ. of Canterbury, New Zealand.

<sup>2</sup>. *Three Sisters and Other Plays by Anton Chehov*. Trans. Constance Garnett London: Chatto and Windus, 1923, repr. 1961. 15.

<sup>3</sup>. Cf. the echoes of this in Tusenbach's speeches, Friel 1981 56.

<sup>4</sup>. A.P. Chekhov (1984) 4. 442. Translation: 'One time I lived in German Street. From German Street I used to walk to the Red Barracks. There on the way is a gloomy bridge, under the bridge the water makes a noise. To a lonely person it becomes sad in the soul. [Pause] And here what a wide, what a rich river! A marvellous river!' Translation - John Goodliffe, Univ. of Canterbury, NZ.

<sup>5</sup>. A.P. Chekhov (1984) 4. 455. Fen 1959 275.

<sup>6</sup>. Hingley 1968 192.

<sup>7</sup>. Bristow 1977 121.

<sup>8</sup>. McGuinness 1990 24.

<sup>9</sup>. Frayn 1983 28.

**Appendix 4: 'Paradigms Of Possibility'****PARADIGMS OF POSSIBILITY**

So you drive on to the frontier of writing  
where it happens again. The guns on tripods;  
the sergeant with his off-on mike repeating  
data about you, waiting for the squawk  
of clearance; the marksman training down  
out of the sun upon you like a hawk.  
And suddenly you're through, arraigned yet freed,  
as if you'd passed from behind a waterfall  
on the black current of a tarmac road  
past armour-plated vehicles, out between  
the posted soldiers flowing and receding  
like tree shadows into the polished windscreen.

Seamus Heaney

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#### **XI Tertiary Examination Questions**

Maynooth College 18 Apr. 1997.

Northern Ireland Education Board 20 Mar. 1997.

University College Dublin 29 Aug. 1997.

University College Galway 13 Mar. 1997.

University of Ulster 18 Mar. 1997.

Queen's University Belfast 22 Apr. 1997.